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Job Satisfaction: a Review of Progress and a Management Viewpoint

Marie Shroff, Civil Service Department

Mrs Shroff is a Principal on loan from the New Zealand Public Service, serving in Personnel Management Division 4 of the Civil Service Department. In this article she collects together the views of Departmental management in the areas where the CSD's Job Satisfaction Team is currently or has recently been at work, and collates them with CSD Personnel Management views to reach a management viewpoint on what is becoming seen as a new and open style of management — *Editor.*

For a small but growing number of people in the Civil Service 'Job Satisfaction' (JS) is a term with a special meaning. As participants in 'Job Satisfaction projects' started around the country by a small team of advisers from the Civil Service Department, they have come to recognise Job Satisfaction as a new way of approaching their work.

Because JS means different things to different people it is not easy to give a handy definition that would satisfy all. But most participants would probably describe it (at its best) as a new and open style of management which creates a climate of understanding between all levels, and an improved way of communicating which means that contributions of every individual to the organisation as a whole are encouraged and appreciated. In practice this means getting people to talk (and listen) to each other about the job, the working environment and their problems or ideas for improvement and where necessary and possible, finding ways of making changes or reaching decisions to which everyone has contributed.

Perhaps the best way to explain JS is to give some background to its development as an idea which could be put to use in the Civil Service. In the early 1970s a small team was formed in the CSD to undertake projects in a number of departments. The aim was to try to determine what factors influenced job satisfaction, to identify particular problems and to develop ways of overcoming them. The team were aware that they were working with an increasingly independent and articulate employee group, better educated and with higher expectations than in the past, and that their experiments should be designed to help the Civil Service adjust its working

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methods and management styles to the new conditions*. Early projects were concerned mainly with job enrichment for individuals, and the team's method of operation was usually to identify problems in an area then return after a time with suggestions to management for improvements.

As JS has developed in concept and practice, more emphasis has been given to the participation of staff at all levels in all stages of a project. The team's style now is to work with staff to try to create a climate in which they identify issues for themselves and find their own solutions. If JS has a leading characteristic it is that it develops and improves communication—between staff members themselves, between management and staff, between unions and management and between sections of a department. The aim is to allow communication to flow backwards and forwards so that ideas will be given a fair trial, and constructive changes made where possible. Everyone affected will be involved in the process and should therefore be committed to changes that may emerge; or on the other hand, to existing practice because it has been questioned and accepted as best practice and is now more fully understood.

One CSD practitioner has suggested that JS is a bit like 'reinventing common sense'. Certainly its aims of involvement, commitment and communication would in principle be contested by few, and would be claimed by many managers as governing their present practice. Where JS makes its contribution is in providing the environment in which these principles can best show themselves. Managers involved in projects frequently comment that only through the project was the necessary catalyst provided to 'get things going' and 'implement the good intentions'. JS therefore emerges as a way to improve management methods, the working environment and the jobs of staff. It concentrates on the human aspects of work organisation by encouraging people in jobs at all levels to reach their full potential. JS recognises that final responsibility must always lie with management; but it seeks to improve decision-making by channelling the talents and energies of all staff into this process. In effect it trains staff in participation and involvement and in helping management to solve problems of many different kinds.

Although certain common principles and methods of operation can be discerned, it must also be emphasised that each project is different. Indeed, one of the principal strengths of JS is its ability to adapt to local differences in people, jobs and organisations. This arises from the nature of JS itself, that the people involved should identify issues and make any changes (or not) themselves. Instead of being imposed from outside, solutions are generated from within.

*K B Robertson 'Job Satisfaction in the Civil Service: a perspective', (*Management Services in Government,* 1973, August, pp 133–139). D E Pace 'A Job Satisfaction Approach to a Management Problem', (*Management Services in Government,* 1975, November, pp 209–213).

Most of the development of JS as a way of improving people's working lives has occurred, not in isolation from people and jobs, but during the operation of projects in the past nine years in a wide variety of settings around the Service. These include the Inland Revenue, the Department of National Savings at Durham, local offices of the Department of Health and Social Security, the civilian Pay and Records Office of the Ministry of Defence at Bath, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys at Titchfield, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in Swansea, the Data Preparation Branch of Customs and Excise in Southend and a number of local offices of departments in Wales.*

JS in practice

How does JS work in action? The initial impetus for a project can be widely varied: it may stem from a general desire to make full use of the talents and energies of staff and reduce the amount of tedious work by rearranging jobs or work flow; or a need may be seen to improve staff morale and to move management towards a more open and participative style. JS can also be used to tackle specific problems with work or with attitudes of staff; and to help manage successfully the human aspects of changes, such as the introduction of new technology at the workplace.

Preparation

A typical project will begin with a request from senior management to the CSD for a study of the possibilities for using Job Satisfaction in a particular area, or from another source such as the CSD team itself or from a union. JS has since 1977 been steered at the national level by a joint group of management and unions, and once agreement has been reached in this forum and with the department concerned, a joint steering group will be set up at local level to oversee the running of a project. A preliminary assessment of the situation in the project area will usually be made and discussed with local management and union officials, and CSD team members assigned to the project will make contact with other key people such as middle managers and the staff of support services.

Beginning the project

At the beginning of the project itself the team members will usually interview or hold group discussions with all staff involved. Everyone is given a chance to express their opinions and confidences are respected by the

**Management Services in Government* articles on JS, in addition to those mentioned in the previous footnote, are: D Burden 'New Model Office Project in DHSS', (1976, February, pp 5-10). J Hunter and D B Crampton 'Bridging the Information Gap: a participative approach to problem solving in a civil service pay office', (1977, August, pp 134–143). Miss M Wood 'Job Satisfaction at DVLC Swansea', (1979, August, pp 137–141).

team. The purpose of this initial phase is to help the staff to identify issues and concerns, to get them involved and encourage them to think and talk freely about what they do. Team members will then make an initial report back to management, staff and the local joint steering group on what has emerged. Desirably the steering group will endorse action on at least some of the issues raised to demonstrate commitment to the JS process and a willingness to accept change. Management, with this support, are then able to respond. At this important early stage, as well as later in the project, the JS team member acts as a catalyst, helping people to articulate their opinions and training them in the art of communication and consultation. He or she generally provides a neutral third party, to resolve conflict where necessary and help to steer events towards productive outcomes.

The main action

Now the real work of the project begins. Consultation processes between all levels at the workplace must be developed through which issues to be pursued can be translated into decisions. Staff and managers themselves, with the help of the team if necessary, will decide what is the most appropriate way of tackling problems which have been identified. Natural working groups may be used or special consultative machinery by grade, joint working groups with members drawn from different grades or sections (including managerial grades), or perhaps working parties on specific issues.

During the course of the project all grades are kept continuously informed of what is happening and the joint steering group guides and monitors progress. The experience of more senior staff may be tapped to contribute to working groups and where necessary specialists or technical experts can be co-opted to help solve particular problems. This phase will vary in length depending on the nature of the problems encountered and the commitment of all parties concerned to the project. Although the JS team will withdraw after an agreed time, experience in many project areas has demonstrated that the activities and general momentum will nevertheless continue of their own accord.

Work at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre of the Department of Transport in Swansea has illustrated some of the ways in which Job Satisfaction can work. In the Vehicle Enquiry Unit which deals with telephone and letter enquiries about licences and tax, staff and managers isolated eight specific areas for improvement and set up working groups to tackle five of them. Out of their work came a better staff training scheme, improved communication with other casework branches resulting in better customer service, improved job content for telephone enquiry clerks and better communication between clerks, supervisors and managers.

In another area at DVLC, the large Clerical Drivers Branch which

processes all applications for driving licences, problems and solutions were different. Managers and staff felt the work was too specialised, in production line style, and Clerical Officers and Clerical Assistants had too little variety in their jobs. A system developed by managers and staff themselves was tried by a group of volunteers, in which each clerk was able to follow right through on an application, with improved training. The experiment proved so successful in bettering job content without decreasing output that all 400 staff are now working on the new 'casework' system with agreement of both staff and managers. Perhaps equally important to the development of JS itself was the fact that in areas where throughput of work had to be maintained at all times these exercises were successfully carried out without causing any serious disruptions or decreases in productivity.

Some outcomes of JS

Staff

At this point it is useful to consider how JS affects the overlapping groups of people mainly concerned with projects: staff, individual managers, management and unions. (The customer, whether seen as Minister, client or taxpayer, or all three, does stand to gain, but is not directly involved in the JS process.) There is much informal evidence to suggest that staff have benefited considerably from many of the projects undertaken. Some of the more specific improvements which have frequently emerged include better job content, staff training and staff reporting, improved office layout, more flexible use of staff and improved customer service leading to greater satisfaction in the work. More important but less tangible have been improvements in morale, communications, confidence and understanding, results identified by staff and union representatives themselves after participation in projects.

Individual people see differing advantages. Some welcome the change in atmosphere and enjoy the feeling of being treated as persons with opinions worth listening to; others like the opportunity to consider how and why a job should be done and to learn more about the work of a branch as a whole. But to the majority what is most important is the chance for real participation and involvement. If changes are made they are thoroughly discussed and worked out by those who actually do the job. This results in a much greater commitment to a decision, a flexibility of approach and the development of individual talent and abilities. Of course not all staff wish to be fully involved. But those who are seem to derive the greatest satisfaction, and others still benefit from the improvements.

Unions

From the union point of view it seems that the balance is also positive, although there have undoubtedly been some problems where supervisory

or managerial grades have felt that benefits for them were slow to emerge. A heightened interest in union affairs is frequently reported by local officials as an outcome of projects, as is increased articulateness and confidence amongst staff in junior grades. Some local union officials identify a general improvement in communication with management and better industrial relations as a direct result of Job Satisfaction. Specific problems are handled with more understanding from both sides.

Management

What does all this mean for management? Some of the answers will already be obvious from the foregoing: better staff morale, industrial relations and staff training, improved commitment to and understanding of work, and increased staff/management communication.

Individual managers

Evidence from projects also suggests that there are welcome results for individual managers from the JS process

- —managers are better informed because communications with their staff have improved
- —problems tend to be identified (or anticipated) and solved better
- —because staff are involved in and contribute to decisions there is less difficulty in implementation, more confidence among managers that decisions are right and better feedback about subsequent effects
- —changes and emergencies are coped with more easily, and difficult or unpopular decisions accepted with more understanding because staff see the reasons for them more clearly
- —in some cases staff have become more efficient, set higher standards for themselves, and improved customer service
- —managers' jobs may change, becoming in many cases more interesting and JS helps them to cope with this change. They themselves are encouraged to give of their best.

Many managers do, of course, have reservations about JS, especially at the start of a project. Loss of output, accountability and control over staff may be feared, and as the project goes ahead the time spent on discussions resented. JS tends to mean more work and decisions at first, and experimenting with changes can be difficult at times, particularly if things do not immediately measure up to expectations. Managers are more exposed, and have to explain and justify their decisions more. Front line managers in particular may feel that improvements are being made for others at their expense. But many of these objections will disappear as the project moves forward. There is no real loss of accountability and control, and decisions

may become easier because they are more soundly based. The extra time spent is balanced by better decisions and hence an increased willingness among staff to implement them. Many managers at the front line, where some of the greatest difficulties are experienced in coping with a more articulate and confident staff, are enthusiastic at the benefits for staff and themselves in the improved job content and working environment. Middle managers report that supervisors are developed personally and professionally by experience of a project.

If other problems arise, each will be approached in a way appropriate to the setting. Personalities can be very important and commitment and co-operation may have to be worked at, to ensure that a project can make progress. Some sections of staff may tend to dominate proceedings, and others will need to be encouraged to participate. Staff changes can be disruptive in a JS setting, although some project areas have reported no difficulties in absorbing new staff into the changed atmosphere. A few problems have arisen for the team itself out of the very success of a project: the newly developed ability of staff themselves to produce ideas and solutions may lead them to discount the value of the impetus given by JS; the build-up of confidence in managers may cause them to reject the team's involvement as unnecessary before the process has been sufficiently developed for all levels of staff.

None of these problems is insurmountable and they are perhaps part of the price which must be paid in the interests of beneficial change. Adjustments are constantly being made to the approach, and of course every project brings ideas for improvements. In some new projects, for instance, preliminary seminars are being held for front line and middle managers as there was evidence to suggest that fuller participation at this level could be encouraged by better communication of both the aims and the limits of JS. Initial results have been that the interest and enthusiasm of those involved has been aroused. These managers are already recognising the possible direct benefits to themselves from the acceptance of the JS approach by those above them, and communications with their staff have already improved even before the project has got under way. Because it has been felt that some projects have stretched out for too long a time, an experiment with a shorter more intensive approach for projects is currently being tried.

As JS becomes more firmly established as a practical process which can be put to use in many ways in the Civil Service, attention is naturally turning towards means of wider dissemination. Its project-based nature and the small number of practitioners are currently a serious limit to effectiveness on a wider scale. A number of possibilities are being considered including training of more departmental teams, the use of existing departmental training resources to introduce JS ideas and practices to managers, and the commissioning of topic-based projects the results of which would have

wider applications across the Service. JS may also have an important role to play in bringing experience and information gained from projects to the attention of senior managers. For example, projects have proved a useful source of information for developing improved personnel management policies and training techniques.

In the final analysis, of course, the satisfaction people derive from their jobs is a matter for the individual. JS is no substitute for tackling causes of dissatisfaction or frustration which stem from external sources. But it can help to provide the environment in which people develop for themselves a more flexible and human way of working which lasts after the team has gone. In general terms what emerges from the most successful projects seems to be a climate of trust and understanding between all grades, a friendly informality building up to confidence and efficiency. Specific changes are important, and often the most visible sign that something has happened during a project. But most participants from all levels seem to be agreed that the most valuable changes take place in the movement of management styles towards more openness and participation.

(Copies of a shortened version of this article are available from Personnel Management Division 4, Civil Service Department without charge.)

We Tried Before, but without the Clout

Philip Nash

The author is Assistant Secretary in charge of management services in Customs and Excise. His division's normal responsibilities have involved major organisational reviews as well as routine methods studies. Since 1979 management services in Customs and Excise have co-ordinated and provided support for the department's Rayner scrutiny programme. The description of the Rayner technique and views expressed in this article are entirely his own — *Editor.*

Management Services in Government has thus far made only passing references to Raynerism and I have felt for some time that it would be useful for someone to undertake an appraisal of this new phenomenon as seen from the management services point of view. Perhaps 'new' is not the right word to use, for as I write the second anniversary of Raynerism approaches. The events of June 1979 begin to recede into memory: before long they will become a further chapter in the history of measures to improve the efficiency of government administration. It will be for the historians to say whether they were a decisive turning point.

This seems to be an appropriate time for a commentary on the way in which the scrutiny technique devised by Sir Derek Rayner operates, as seen from the point of view of an MS practitioner who having been in the efficiency business man and boy was beginning to believe that he had seen, if not everything, most of it. . . .

There is a tradition that those wedded to the *status quo* carry about with them a compendium of what used to be called killer phrases and might today be described as 'Yes, Minister' talk, which are calculated to see off any new ideas or recommendations for change; thus, 'the time is not ripe . . .' 'the present arrangements work well enough . . .' or 'it has of course been tried before. . . .' The last of these is my favourite. I have heard it used in attempts to demolish radical and not-so-radical proposals for change, to pour cold water on eminently sensible recommendations (including some of my own) and in particular to dispose of new ideas for promoting efficiency. I suppose this is understandable since senior civil servants, according to William Plowden of RIPA, 'have certain distinctive qualities that are only partly admirable: an extreme capacity for hard work, a strong sense of

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public service, a mastery of efficient bureaucratic administration, institutional loyalty, premature exhaustion, caution, a well-developed sense of *déjà vu,* secretiveness, pessimism and cynicism'*. That bit about *déjà vu* seemed to offer both the basis for a title and a theme for this appraisal, which is really concerned with showing why the Rayner technique looks like succeeding where earlier bids to improve the efficiency of government administration have failed.

The Clout

It has to be said at the outset that now, as never before, the climate is one of enormous political and popular will, even among civil servants (though by no means all of them!) for reducing the functions and size of the bureaucracy of central government. To ignore this and the consequential impetus for change would be to make comparisons between the Rayner scrutiny technique and earlier efforts to improve efficiency more than a little artificial. Who knows what management services in particular might have achieved had our crafts been practised over the years in such a political climate and with such a driving force!

But in so far as it is possible to detach the scrutiny technique from the strong political power behind it, this analysis is about *modus operandi* rather than climate or driving force. Here, for the reader who has no direct experience of how a scrutiny is conducted, a general outline of the salient features of the technique may be helpful. I make no apology for including this description, since it continues to astonish me that so many people, in and out of management services, still have only the vaguest idea of how the scrutiny technique works.

The Rayner approach

A Rayner scrutiny involves the critical examination, to a tightly controlled *timetable,* of a particular policy, activity or function or a specific aspect of organisation in central government, with a view to reducing the cost of administration and increasing efficiency and effectiveness, especially by cutting out unnecessary work.

Since the programme began in 1979 there have been 68 *departmental* scrutinies and one *government-wide* review (of the statistical services), comprising a review of certain 'inter-departmental' statistics and 20 separate reviews in particular departments. This year a further 40 or so departmental scrutinies and two government-wide reviews (of administrative forms and R & D supporting services) are planned. The sorts of subjects covered are: organisation of local office networks, systems of delivering grants, benefits etc to the public and businesses, procedures

**New Society,* 9 April 1981, pp 53–54.

involved in the collection of revenue, internal financial control systems, in-house supporting services (eg transport, registry systems) and so on. The cost of the activity under scrutiny varies from a few hundred thousand pounds to hundreds of millions.

The System

The annual scrutiny season starts with a request from the Prime Minister for *ministers' proposals* for the next round of scrutinies. All departments except the smallest are expected to produce one subject for scrutiny; the larger departments may be required to produce two or more. Departments will already have exercised their minds on the reviews they wish to undertake and proposals are submitted to departmental ministers for their consideration. A lot of effort goes, or should go, into the selection of subjects, which are expected to produce substantial results.

The ministerial responses are submitted to the Prime Minister and at this stage Sir Derek Rayner comments on them. The Prime Minister indicates the subjects that she will take a special interest in and Sir Derek pays particular attention to them thereafter. Some subjects are rejected by the Prime Minister and departments are asked to come up with an alternative. Terms of reference are looked at critically by Sir Derek and his staff who consult Civil Service Department, Treasury and Central Policy Review Staff as necessary.

Meanwhile in departments scrutiny officers are selected, *usually at Principal or Assistant Secretary* level, and almost invariably from within the department's own ranks. The scrutineer, who may be, and in my department always is, supported by a small team, works under the guidance of Sir Derek and his staff but will report *formally to his own minister* (or a junior departmental minister) who takes a personal interest before, during and, most important, after the scrutiny.

The first task to be tackled by the scrutineer is to produce a *study plan*. This will outline the approach he intends to take, the sorts of questions he will be seeking to answer, the issues he will pursue and the objectives he has set for achievement within the time allowed, usually, though not invariably *90 working days*. The study plan may be seen in draft by the management of his department, but like the subject for scrutiny and terms of reference, has to be approved by ministers and Sir Derek Rayner. Experience shows that this process is by no means a formality.

During his examination the scrutineer is encouraged to go out and see the work as it is actually done and to talk to as many as possible of the people directly involved, probing each part of the procedure until he understands why and how it is done. He is expected to identify the cost of each discrete element of the activity and, particularly important, to establish the *value added* by it. His approach must be radical to the point of

challenging the activity's very existence and uninhibited by convention, but he should be realistic in his recommendations and confident that they are soundly based and capable of implementation either by changes in the law or by administrative action. A detailed statement of the savings expected must be incorporated in the findings.

The visiting list of a scrutineer in his search for the nub of the problem is outlined in his study plan and is constrained only by the discipline of time, although it is not unknown for a scrutineer to seek and obtain the permission of his minister and Sir Derek Rayner for an extension of the 90 working day limit. The extent of his interviewing within his department is in a real sense for him alone to decide. If he is sensible—and doubtless most scrutineers are sensible as well as bright—he will always strive to observe the niceties that we in management services have tried to observe, of consulting, outlining our proposals as they begin to emerge and cohere, and taking due account of the reaction of those concerned with the operation of the existing arrangements.

There must inevitably be a *report.* The report of a Rayner scrutiny is presented in draft to the minister—and to Sir Derek if it is a subject in which the Prime Minister has asked him to take special interest. The minister or Sir Derek may choose to comment on the findings or the detail of the argument. The approved version then forms the basis of discussion between the minister and the department, which will formally convey to ministers and to Sir Derek its views on the acceptability of the recommendations. The report which will in most cases be made available to the department's Trade Union Side may subsequently be released for publication.

The report is by no means the end of the story as was often the case in earlier years. The end-product of a Rayner scrutiny after completion of any necessary consultations is the *action document.* This contains the minister's intentions for implementing—or reasons for not implementing—each of the report's recommendations and an essential feature of it is a timetable for putting the proposals into effect and for achieving any savings that have been identified by the scrutineer.

The action document is not the work of the scrutineer, although he may well be involved in its preparation. It is in theory and in practice the means by which departmental ministers can ensure that there is no relaxation of effort towards implementation in accordance with the agreed timetable. Sir Derek Rayner and his office monitor progress towards implementation and make six-monthly reports to the Prime Minister.

Action on the particular report is not the end of the story. An important feature of the scrutiny arrangements is that lessons learned in one

department or branch of administration should subsequently be *read across* and applied as appropriate elsewhere.

That, in broad outline, is the scrutiny technique. The fact that Rayner scrutinies may be accompanied by publicity in Parliament and in the media is of course likely to improve the chances of their success, except perhaps where particular recommendations stir up a hornets' nest of more than average proportions. The prospect of adverse publicity may of course serve to deter the scrutineer from taking too much for granted during the study. For him the yawning pit may indeed be deeper than the one we are used to in conducting our affairs less publicly.

How then does the Rayner technique compare with the traditional MS approach to what is more or less the same sort of task? Let us examine a few salient features.

Subjects for study

The Government's commitment to a six-figure reduction in the number of civil servants during its term of office has provided great impetus for the scrutiny technique. It has also not unnaturally led to the identification of more substantial subjects for study because savings identified count towards targets that would otherwise be achieved with even greater difficulty. But without this impetus management services achieved substantial successes in major areas of operational activity during the 1970s. They were perhaps inhibited from tackling subjects involving high policy now accepted without question as a suitable diet for Rayner scrutineers or for internal review, but successes there were. In my department in 1973/74, for example, a major review of preventive controls in the customs field was undertaken by management services with substantial and lasting results in terms of economies. There were a number of other major reviews of organisation and procedures, some comparable in terms of size and significance for the department's operations with those since subjected to Rayner scrutiny.

Sad to say, left to their own devices departments too often regarded efficiency review as low-level stuff and a generation of 'O & M chaps' were for the most part allowed to examine only the nuts and bolts rather than the more elaborate and increasingly expensive machinery of organisation or operations.

Who chooses?

Thus the levels at which invitations to review were issued tended in the past to be in the middle ranges rather than the top of the department's management. On the other hand by the very nature of Raynerism the gleam in the eye that leads to the choice of subject for scrutiny is likely to come from the more senior levels. It may even first appear in the eye of the department's minister, or as a glint in the eyes of critics at the centre. Thus

with Rayner we have for example an interesting new breed of topics for scrutiny, those which like statistical services in 1980 and administrative forms and research establishments in 1981 are common to all, or a number of departments.

In my own department management services are consulted about forthcoming subjects for Rayner scrutiny. We were delighted that the first subject chosen for study in 1979 was proposed by us and accepted by top management and ministers. However, the important new factor is that subjects for review are effectively triggered off at Under Secretary level or above, whereas it is the exception rather than the rule for management services reviews to be sponsored or prompted at this level. The consequences in terms of the degree of interest in, and commitment to, the findings need no elaboration.

The hope must be that management services in all departments will be consulted before the Rayner scrutiny programme is put together; they have, or should have, much advice to offer on where the scope lies for improvement in efficiency either in organisation or in procedures. They and their colleagues in staff inspection and internal audit should know where the extra clout of Rayner is most likely to be applied to good effect.

Choosing the scrutineers

The Rayner system depends on capable people for its success. The need for men—or women—of proven ability and sure promise to carry out the scrutinies is a subject on which departments are left in no doubt.

I firmly believe that MS work also calls for the ablest people. Observation of the practice of management services in government, not least during three years at the Civil Service College spent in training good, bad and indifferent new practitioners, has reinforced this belief. In selecting MS staff we should always look for particular aptitudes and qualities, but the need for people of all-round ability has for too long been ducked in many quarters. By regarding MS as just another posting suitable for staff of average quality—or worse—some organisations have created the ideal climate for ineffectiveness and the poor reputation of their MS operations. So far as I am able to judge it is in those departments which have selected their MS staff on the basis of ability that the craft has been practised most successfully. It was indeed in such departments that MS progressed from the nuts and bolts work of the 1950s and 1960s to more substantial efficiency reviews in the 1970s.

As for grade level, despite the strengthening of management services and staff inspection that followed the Fulton Report, the English Committee reported a decade later that the grades of staff employed on these duties were generally too low. We were indeed still using Principals primarily to manage the practitioners rather than participate in review activity. Rayner

scrutinies, by contrast, have almost invariably been undertaken by staff at Principal level or above. Without any doubt much of the extra clout derives from this acknowledgement of the need for certain types of review to be done by people of more senior rank, although we must not undervalue the importance of the work, done over the years and continuing, by the traditional work force of management services at Higher Executive Officer and Senior Executive Officer levels.

Training and experience

No formal training in review techniques or consultancy skills is provided for the Rayner scrutineer. If he is bright enough the consultancy skills will be instinctive. (Perhaps these particular skills have tended to be given too much emphasis by management services pundits in the past?) But for me the model scrutineer is one who combines ability with experience and especially some experience however brief of MS or similar work. The need for expertise in the finer detail of review techniques can be met if he is supported by trained people from MS or a like discipline. Whether, working on his own, a capable but untrained Principal, full neither in years nor experience, can be expected invariably to avoid all the pitfalls (familiar to us) of the leading question, the glib or unsupported answer, the unconfirmed facts and especially unchecked figures, only those few who have detailed knowledge of all the scrutinies can tell.

The 90-day rule

I suppose that in the setting of time limits and too often failing to keep to them we have tended to lack discipline in management services work. Experience of the 90-working days limit for Rayner scrutinies shows what can be achieved if a study is well organised and target dates are treated as deadlines. The study plan helps to achieve the disciplined and methodical approach required in a wide-ranging scrutiny and there is no denying the importance of an externally imposed time limit. For the typical scrutiny 90 days has proved to be about right and although the limits can be extended with the permission of Sir Derek and the minister, the scrutineer seems to feel it a matter of honour to try to complete within the appointed time. The sense of urgency thus created is good for him and helps to ensure that doors are opened by his clients quickly and unhesitatingly, even though 'welcome' doormats may not always be in evidence.

The job to be done

As for what goes on during those 90 working days, we must hope that there is no fundamental difference between the two systems. Both types of review investigate—or should investigate—the HOW and the WHY of

administration. Both are free—or should be free—to challenge not only the value added but the very existence of a policy, function or activity. Both involve—or should involve—getting down to the point where the work is done and tapping the experience and knowledge that reside there. In particular both the Rayner scrutineer and the MS practitioner have constantly to beware the tendency to overglamorise in order to impress. Facts must be presented without gloss and figures treated and produced with caution. Recommendations must in both cases be realistic and neither too timid nor too ambitious.

Action is of the essence

It has to be said that the major deficiency in the practice of management services in the past has been what followed—or failed to follow—after our work was done. Where the will to implement our recommendations was favourable, too often the process was inordinately slow. We have always talked of *implementation* but Sir Derek's word, significantly, is *action*. His word is more succinct and leaves no room for doubt about what is expected. The action document will unquestionably prove to be the instrument by which *post facto* the effectiveness of the scrutinies will be tested and judged. But as an integral part of the Rayner technique it also has a lot to do with the valuable assumption that change will surely occur. We must strive to introduce something similar into MS practice, for therein above all else lies the clout.

Conclusion

The novelty of the Rayner technique lies in its tauter disciplines; the involvement of ministers and senior officials in the scrutiny from beginning to end; the relative independence of the examining officer and his freedom from steering committees and similar constraints; and the outside involvement and interest in the study (and subsequent action) of both Sir Derek and the Prime Minister.

We in management services can learn a great deal from this technique and the framework surrounding it. If, in the long run, departments' internal review arrangements adopt from it no more than the tauter disciplines, such as providing for a study plan and firm timetable and (after the report) some sort of plan for action, our effectiveness will undoubtedly improve.

As for the wider issues, this article is an appraisal of technique, not a political prophecy. Whether the external driving force is indispensable; whether it will continue at its present strength; whether Raynerism will eventually become institutionalised and what effect this will have on the momentum for change; and whether, in its present or modified form, the scrutiny technique will survive: these are questions for another occasion and a different commentator.

The Future Role of Management Services in the British Civil Service

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Introduction

My objective in this brief paper is to take a broad look at how the management services role in government might change in the next few years. I shall not be concerned here to document particular details or propose specific developments. Indeed the tenor of my argument is deliberately speculative. My aim is to identify those organisational and political pressures which are likely to shape the development of the management services role in government in the medium term future. I hope thereby to contribute to and hopefully widen the current debate about how best to use management services within the Civil Service. For in my opinion questions about the role and effectiveness of management services are closely related to questions about the future effectiveness of our whole system of public administration. I shall in the course of the paper take a deliberately broad interpretation of the term 'management services' to include not only O & M practitioners but also staff inspectors, job evaluators, systems analysts, operational researchers and others who operate in various advisory roles to line management in order to improve organisational performance.

There are several reasons why this debate about the future role of management services in government should be vigorously pursued to explore a broad spectrum of opinion. For one thing the moment itself seems opportune for a careful look at the role and problems of management services. For despite significant achievements there is concern from various quarters that management services may not have realised its full potential.

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The review exercises initiated by the present Administration's Adviser Sir Derek Rayner to some extent imply such a view.

But there is a danger in examining this question of the impact of management services for debate to centre upon the wrong issues. In response to a Select Committee Review some commentators have tended to interpret this matter of the effectiveness of management services as part of the broader issue of the overall role of the centre (ie the Civil Service Department and Her Majesty's Treasury) *vis-à-vis* departments. In my opinion such an interpretation deflects attention away from the real point of concern which is how management services units are seen and used within their own departments. In the final analysis the impact of management services depends upon the value that line management place upon its functions. This will obviously be enhanced by whatever credibility its practitioners can establish in day-to-day, face-to-face dealings during the course of assignments and projects. Although central departments can be instrumental in helping departments see new ways of achieving change it would be naïve to assume that restructuring of central departments' functions would remove those obstacles which inhibit greater effectiveness of management services units with departments.

A further reason why the future role of management services needs to be more broadly debated concerns the impact of technological change (especially the silicon chip) in the public sector. Whilst many government departments have themselves been actively concerned with the promotion of technological changes in wider society and have deployed computers effectively on work which could easily be batched, other areas of these same departments have often remained substantially unaffected by technological advance. Two forecasted developments in computer technology are likely to put an end to this situation. Firstly, there is the current vogue away from large main frame centralised installations in favour of a more flexible web of mini-computers. This trend alone almost guarantees the diffusion of computer technology to the smaller and dispersed offices within the system. This process may be further accelerated as the price of computing power falls dramatically as some confidently predict it will.

The only credible scenario for government then is one in which much that is bureaucratically routine may be programmed. For management services practitioners such a scenario is an optimistic, even exciting, prospect, but its successful accomplishment demands careful consideration. Operating, as he increasingly must, at the leading edge of these new computer technologies the management services practitioner can exercise a crucial influence right at the point of impact where new systems and job designs are reconciled. Failure in this key linking role between the technically oriented computer people (who know what the hardware and software can

do) and the line managers (who understand what work needs to be done) is too costly to contemplate. The calibre of the management services contribution will significantly determine whether the Civil Service moves progressively forward to exploit the opportunities of the new information processing technologies or is catapulted into a series of computer nightmares.

Yet another reason why the role of management services in government should be subject to scrutiny concerns the question of manpower levels. Ideally the role of the management services practitioner would be to integrate knowledge of new technology (especially information technology), good job design and the requirements of the tasks to be done in such a way that line managers are convinced of the need to change or improve their existing ways of working by the irrefutable excellence of the practitioner's analysis and recommendations. However, in the current economic climate and that for the forseeable future, the need for cost and staff savings has assumed a greater importance with other criteria such as the improvement of standards of service, quality of work and the need for departments to respond effectively to new legislation becoming less critical. In practice, where manpower is a significant element in total costs, this concern with cost savings may be translated in terms of manpower reductions. Pressure to reduce numbers raises important issues of both a professional and practical nature for the management services practitioner. There is, for example, the problem of prejudging the diagnosis. Traditionally, the professional model of operation which management services has espoused has stressed the need to conduct assignments on the basis of an open-minded examination of the system's problems, whether these be those of organisation, control systems, work methods or whatever. There is a danger that structuring into the project, as an initial constraint, some arbitrary level of cut may lead to other problems being ignored and may jeopardise the prospects of achieving change in the long term.

One can speculate about the reactions to these pressures for cuts from both management services practitioners and their clients. One danger is that both become increasingly cynical about the contribution of management services perhaps with the function coming to be seen crudely as organisational hatchet work rather than a service to enhance line management's ability effectively to use resources. Such developments may also raise practical difficulties. For one thing, unless local management is encouraged to accept responsibilities for achieving staff reductions, they may become defensive uncooperative and resentful about changes imposed under a covering rhetoric of 'objective' management services analysis. Secondly, one suspects that many management services practitioners themselves would experience a certain personal and ethical discomfort with a view of their role which cast them primarily as architects

of staff reduction exercises. Many people undertaking a tour of duty in management services do so out of a sense of wanting actively to help the organisation use resources effectively to achieve its objectives without detracting from and hopefully improving the quality of working life of the staff involved. To truncate the role in the way described is to risk making the job unattractive to the very staff whose competence, commitment and skill are required to make renewal and change in the Civil Service more effective.

My final argument for taking an interest in the future role of management services in government connects with the quality of working life debate. It is important to ask not only how efficient and just our future system of public administration will be but also what kind of working environment will it afford the public servant? Government itself has taken the lead in urging industrial organisations to consider such issues and there have been a number of Job Satisfaction studies in government itself. How does this affect the management services practitioner? At the simplest level we can see the management services practitioner as having a key influence on the design of both individual jobs and the information and control systems in the Civil Service of the future. If we put this observation beside the finding (which is almost universally supported by the Job Satisfaction literature) that interesting job content, some measure of autonomy and freedom from restrictive controls are key parameters in motivating staff and promoting high levels of job satisfaction we can begin to see the problem. In a situation where decisions about the computer hardware and technical system design considerations may be pre-eminent, what prospects are there for a balanced integrative approach which takes into account structural, procedural and human aspects of change?

So let me summarise my argument so far. It is simply this. We need to widen the debate about the future role of management services in government. The way this role is enacted will have an important influence on the future effectiveness of public administration and the sort of organisational climate in which civil servants have to operate.

What sort of pressures will shape the management services role?

In starting to consider how the management services role might evolve in government in the future we need at the outset to make a simple point about organisational roles. They are not (unlike dramatic roles) scripted in advance. This means that the sort of role management services adopts in the organisational drama is one that is negotiated with other organisational interests. Top management of management services units may have all sorts of ideas about the sort of role they would ideally like to see develop (indeed it is important that they have such a strategic development plan).

But the eventual role adopted by management services units will be the resultant of many pressures. It is important then for those in departments concerned with policy formulation regarding the deployment of management services expertise to identify what sort of factors will influence the management services role in their own situation. For I think it is clear that there will be wide variations in local circumstances. In the space available here I can do little more than sketch some of the pressures which may interact to shape the direction of management services roles with the plea that the heads of management services units make their own situational analysis. We are talking here then of identifying those local contingencies and pressures which need to be managed if management services is to renegotiate its strategic role within departments. What sort of factors are relevant?

The political climate is, of course, important. Heads of departments may have different views as to the sort of role a management services capability should play within their department. Whether the emphasis is on cost reduction, manpower savings projects or upon assignments aimed at the improvement and upgrading of systems, performance will depend upon political developments which cannot be controlled. What is clear, however, is that it may be dangerous to assume that there is a consistent view amongst departmental top management about the management services role. Indeed top management's views about management services vary considerably. Some may see management services as a device for dealing with recalcitrant or ineffectual local management—a sort of managerial task force who can be sent in to tackle an area or problem going out of control. Others have emphasised a more consultative approach.

But top management's views about the overall role to be played by management services units are only one factor influencing the eventual role adopted. Other groups also may influence this. Indeed efforts to exert influence over the management services role may increase significantly in the future with the result that assignment work may take on a much more political character than at present.

But although the general orientations of key groups will help to shape an outline for the role of management services it will be down at the level of detail ie the terms of reference for particular projects that the real script for the management services part will be written. Whether this will be a major or minor role in the overall drama remains to be seen.

One thing is clear and that is that some management services practitioners have mixed feelings about their current roles. Some client departments have seen the management services contribution in too limited terms. Management services responsibilities are sometimes confined to undertaking a study, producing a report and identifying action options. They are not extended to help with the implementation of solutions. Some

managers prefer this 'Dump and Run' model of operating, since it leaves them free to ignore management services recommendations if other considerations dictate such a policy. But for management services who are concerned about how they are used as an effective resource it can be a thoroughly unsatisfactory, not to say frustrating situation.

Technological developments as we have already indicated will also play a decisive part in shaping the future role of management services in government. The sort of projects and problems which the organisation throws up for management services units to consider will depend in turn upon the impact of new office equipment and data processing machinery.

What is the implication of all this? Very simply, it is this. If the management services role in government is going to change—and there is good evidence that it must do—then such a change in role cannot simply be imposed by those who are responsible for managing management service units. Any reconstruction of the role must be negotiated within the constraints imposed by the organisation's internal political system. But perhaps it is time to turn to the question of what range of role options are available.

Management services roles in government: options for the future

As I have tried to argue above, the role which management services will play is not just a matter for management services specialists to determine but is to a certain extent dependent upon the sort of role it is allowed to adopt by other organisational interest groups. What sort of alternative roles are possible? Whilst it may not be possible to forecast precise developments I think it is possible to sketch out certain key dimensions along which management services roles may vary. It may be helpful to set out these options as a series of dichotomies recognising, of course, that each management services unit will need to develop a strategic role profile appropriate to its own circumstances.

One area of obvious concern is the decision about a reactive versus proactive posture. Should management services units continue to function in a basically reactive mode responding to problems and pressures presented to them by line management? Or should they be invited to suggest projects, assignments and areas for managerial attention? Should they indeed be given authority to conduct regular reviews and have a mandatory right of entry to all parts of their department? Is it in fact possible to move to a more active role for management services units without unduly threatening line management's prerogatives?

Related to this question of the overall posture of management services are decisions about the sort of problems and projects which form the mix of assignments. Should management services focus specifically upon clearly defined operational problems, the detail of methods procedures and work

flows at office level? A good case could be made out for such an orientation exploiting, as it clearly does, the established professional tools of the trade. Or should management services units move the balance of their work more towards a concern with strategic long range issues?

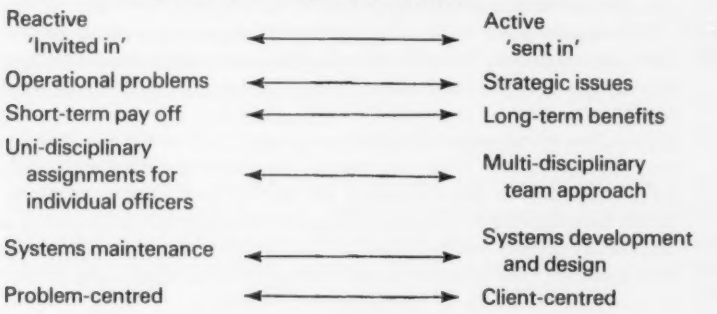
How should management services projects be controlled and managed? Should the approach be centred as at the moment upon determining in advance into what sort of category of problems an assignment fits then designating a single project officer to undertake the work? Or is there a need to make greater use of interdisciplinary teams? In some areas this is already happening but do we have the skills to function effectively in such groups? How are such teams best motivated, managed and controlled?

Whether different sorts of management services expertise (eg O & M and computer systems analysis) should be more closely integrated within departments is another role option which must be considered. What are the implications of a change in posture here for relations with other specialists, for example, personnel, training and finance branches?

Another area of role choice centres upon the system design versus systems maintenance orientation. Should the focus be on adjustments, improvements, running repairs etc on the current system of work arrangements, or is there a case for trying to move management services towards a longer term design and development orientation?

Figure 1 summarises some of these role options.

Figure I—Role options for management services



Let us be clear about the argument I am advancing. I am not prescribing any one particular role profile as being the optimal. For what is an effective strategic profile on the above dimensions in one part of the Civil Service may be inappropriate in another department. But what I am saying is that management services roles are likely to change and that it is vital to identify what sorts of alternative modes of operating are available. But more im-

portantly we have to identify what needs to be done to renegotiate the new role with other interested parties within the organisation.

If pressed for a prediction about how things may develop however, I do see certain of the pressures identified earlier as moving management services towards a particular role model. Increasingly I think we shall see management services moving towards a more explicit professional consultancy orientation with a profile biased towards the right-hand end of *Figure 1*. Indeed many management services people already possess the skills and use the techniques of professional consultants and think of themselves in such terms. However, such a role shift—if it were to gain momentum—raises a number of questions.

Management services as internal consultancy: some problems and implications

If we believe that the role of an internal consultant may become a more widely accepted role for management services what are the implications of such a development?

Perhaps the first point to note is that the sort of training which management services practitioners receive may well need to be extended to include some inputs on the theory and skills of effective consultancy. Specifically the consultant needs more than technical competence to operate successfully. He needs also a high level of people skills to deal with managers' anxieties and worries coupled with sound political judgement to establish the limits of the feasible. This observation may carry implications for selection as well as training policy.

The second point to note is that those who manage management services expertise may need to redefine their own roles. New management approaches and structures based upon a collaborative collegiate model of organisation may be required. One thing is certain and that is that existing approaches to management services management within the Civil Service may require revision. There are likely to be substantial differences between current operations and managing the sort of management services unit which handles mainly long-term strategic management issues using multi-disciplinary project teams where the goal is the design and development of new systems. The question is are management services units in the Civil Service ready and able to respond to this challenge?

Management Services Helps Disabled Staff

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Introduction

In February 1980 a 17 year old disabled typist was appointed to a post in the Department of the Civil Service for Northern Ireland. The appointee, who was the first thalidomide victim to be employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service, had reached the Royal Society of Arts Stage II standard in typewriting and was thus eligible for a civil service post as a typist.

Due to her disabilities, only three fingers on each hand, no wrist flexibility, shortened arms and permanent confinement to a motorised wheelchair, it was immediately apparent that she would be unable to use standard equipment without some modification. Management Services was therefore invited to recommend the most appropriate equipment including any modifications to the standard equipment which would enable her to cope with her day-to-day duties as normally as possible.

The unusual nature of this case and the solutions to the problems that were eventually devised may be of general interest and it is hoped that this short article may be helpful if other similar circumstances should occur.

The Problems

Although the typist has three fingers on each hand she is only able to use three of them in total for typing. Whilst she can type on a standard electric typewriter, her short arms and the fact that she is confined to a fairly low wheelchair means that she is unable to reach the back of the machine and consequently she cannot feed the paper into it. For this reason, at the time of the MS investigation, she was using her own portable typewriter.

In order to correct an error it was necessary for her first to hold a pencil rubber in her mouth and erase it by moving her head from side to side. Although this method was quite successful she periodically developed lip sores and it became necessary to devise some other system.

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Because of the height at which the typist had to sit in her wheelchair the standard typist's desk was unsuitable and also due to her lack of body movement the desk drawers where typing paper is normally kept were inaccessible to her.

The Solutions

A partial solution might have been to recommend a portable typewriter but it was evident that such a machine would not be sufficiently robust to withstand the daily use to which it would be subjected and consequently it was felt that this would restrict the range of work that the typist could do. It was decided to seek a solution which would minimise the difficulties of the new typist to the point where she could undertake the full range of work that comes into the Typing Centre.

In order that she could use a standard electric typewriter it was necessary to find a method to enable her to load paper into the machine. It was discovered that although she was unable to load paper into the machine in the normal way if the machine was turned round she was able to load the paper from the back. This problem was therefore overcome by mounting the typewriter on an 'all purpose mechanic's turntable' fitted with a brake similar to that used by a typewriter mechanic. This device enabled the typist to rotate the machine at will and load the paper as required.

The problem of lip sores arising from her method of effecting corrections was solved by providing her with a golfball typewriter with a correcting feature. The provision of this typewriter, however, introduced another problem in so much that when the typewriter was in position on the turntable the typist, due to her lack of body movement, was unable to see the line of type immediately behind the golfball. To overcome this the typewriter was mounted on a lectern which angled the typewriter towards the typist enabling her to see the line of type.

The lectern and turntable were permanently mounted on to the desk which was lowered to allow the typist to use her motorised wheelchair as her work seat. The desk drawers were removed to improve access and storage of paper was provided by desk top boxes for A4 and A5. The typewriter was mounted on to the turntable and the power lead was plugged into a ceiling power point, thus preventing any problems of entanglement when the typwriter was rotated.

Conclusion

By modifying standard equipment the typist was able to operate effectively at minimal additional cost. After six months her output was equal to that of other typists at the same level of experience. She is thus able to undertake the full range of work without any special concession to her disability.

The Discipline of Performance Measurement

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Introduction

My intention in writing this article is to pose a question and then to answer it. The question is whether performance measurement is a discipline. Having read all of two sentences the reader's response may well be either 'if you ask a silly question you get a silly answer' or, 'he clearly thinks he knows the answer. The question is rhetorical.' So I must first try to justify this question-and-answer game. My motives are simple. My management services experience has shown me that there are many areas of activity which are recognised as disciplines associated with managing or advising managers. They include accounting, O & M, operational research, statistics, industrial psychology, work study, systems study and no doubt lots of others. Every so often a little jostling occurs for a place in the sun and new subjects or disciplines arise, most frequently as outgrowths from others or as bridges between others. This article is a tentative jostle on the part of performance measurement. Why should it need it; what is the advantage of a place in the sun? It is that once the subject is recognised as such, that recognition, the new found OK-status of the name performance measurement, attracts contributions—a sharing of problems, ideas and developments. Such is the pace of modern life that an idea, if it grows, may even become a concept! But it must have a subject or a discipline to grow in.

Government and the private sector

I am a civil servant, and it would be reasonable to expect me to write about performance measurement in government. It is common to point to the lack of the yardstick of profit as something which distinguishes performance assessment (by which I mean both performance measurement and other non-measurement means of assessing performance) in government from that in the private sector. That view is debatable. Certainly there are many areas within an organisation which will look pretty much the same whether

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they sit in the public or the private sector. For example the operation of processing payments to individuals and of processing the accompanying documents will not generally be influenced by the presence or absence of the profit motive in the organisation undertaking the operation. Of course there may be motives of, say, equity of service instead of those of profit in the organisation and that will affect the relationship between it and its clients. But the actual payment-plus-documentation process could well look very much the same in either case. So in making a case for the subject of performance measurement I see no need to deal particularly with government operations.

Criteria

The criteria by which we should judge whether performance measurement is a subject or discipline are, I think, first, whether there is, or should be, extensive application of any findings in that area; second, whether any practical benefit accrues from that application, and third, whether getting to those findings is sufficiently difficult to require sustained study. The following three sections look at these criteria in turn.

Extensiveness of application

Performance measurement is already very widely applied. In fact performance assessment and to a somewhat lesser extent performance measurement are as common as management itself. We need not search far for the reasons: management is concerned with planning, organising, directing and controlling certain activities. Those activities are *performed.* So management is about management of performance, and assessing performance means assessing what management is about. That is done almost everywhere in business, government and industry on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis by managers at various levels, by boards of directors, shareholders, public boards, newspaper writers, ministers and so on. In other words performance assessment is about as widely practised as is management in the broad sense. But like the man who did not know he spoke prose, the individual manager may not realise that he assesses performance. This assertion is, I think, easy to accept because it is about performance *assessment.* Less easy perhaps is my next assertion, that a good fraction of performance assessment takes a variety of numerical forms, and many of these forms can be looked upon as measures of performance. I cannot make an appeal to any precise survey, but consider the enormous variety of managerial information which is already quoted numerically. It can include all the many-faceted ways of quoting resources consumed, of quoting production planned or achieved, of dealing with work-in-progress, stock, productivity assessment, rates of delivery, statistics of quality of service, timeliness of service and so on. And that

information is used and quoted numerically in almost every work activity one can think of. Which of these quantities is actually a measure of performance and which is not is a matter of debate and/or definition. But if we accept for the moment that many of the derived quantities like 'cases dealt with per man hour', '£'s collected per staff member' or 'percentage shortfall' can reasonably be called measures of performance then there is no doubt that an enormous number of measures of performance are already in everyday use.

There is a rather more subtle point which I can only indicate here. There may be a distinction (and I believe there *is* a distinction) between the idea of a measure of performance and that of performance measurement. The distinction is not simply one of words, but for the present I shall use both terms almost interchangeably because I do not think the thrust of the present article is greatly influenced by this consideration.

Practical benefit

Performance measurement has no intrinsic merit as has, say, painting or music. If we study it at all it must surely be for some practical benefit. That being so, we should have some kind of vision of how the practical benefit is to be realised. Here I should like to look aside for a paragraph or two at how new thoughts and ideas are from time to time paraded before an expectant world and sold. Most (or is it all?) ideas contain an element of prescription. The more detailed and precise prescriptions are of the kind 'planning is good: here is a formal planning system for you, complete with computer and forms'. At present the word 'package' seems to be favoured for describing products of this kind, although to me it conjures up something that comes in a cardboard box, perhaps under plain wrapper, and certainly with full instructions. At the other extreme the less detailed prescriptions are those which are presented as a study and which leave the reader to draw his own conclusions if he wishes.

In the case of performance measurement I think the best way forward is through a fairly broad kind of prescription which enables individual managers to improve their action in an individual way. After all managers were managing before management science appeared, and they were assessing performance before any management advisor exhorted them to do so. The student of performance measurement cannot, then, tell a particular manager how to run his business, and the idea that an 'expert' in performance measurement can decide what specific measures a manager should use is quite false.

The relationship between the 'expert' in performance measurement and the manager he tries to assist should be something like that between an architect and his client. The client must know to some extent what he

wants; the adviser must know about the technicalities, and in particular how to erect what the client wants in such a way that it will stand up.

In this the benefits, if they accrue at all, are pretty sure to be practical ones—managers are mostly practical people. Whether the benefits accrue in fact is simply a matter of whether a particular manager learns through the study of performance measurement something *he* considers useful. That is bound up with the complexities of the study: whether there is something to be learned which is not apparent in the normal course of events. I was going in any case to discuss the need for sustained study as the third of the criteria I suggested earlier, and the discussion of practical benefit now merges with that of sustained study.

Sustained study

I claim that even at the very crudest level there is much that managers (or rather some managers) can learn from a slightly more sustained piece of thinking than they can normally accommodate in their busy working lives. The crudest level I have in mind is that of defining some common terms associated with assessment and measurement of performance. One quotation will do although I could search out many: Sir Douglas Allen, now Lord Croham wrote*

'One of the major themes of debate at the first British Institute of Management National Convention held last year was the proper scope of the function of government and the share of national resources we should devote to them. This issue has two dimensions, one political and one managerial. The political concerns the goals or major objectives of the government departments within which civil servants work. The managerial concerns the effectiveness of government departments in achieving these goals with maximum economy of resources. Of course these two elements interact, no government can afford to determine objectives without attempting to assess the costs involved.'

As a verbal statement this may be fine, but if one looks at it in terms of possible measures, that is actually putting numbers to things, what sort of measures would we use for 'effectiveness of government departments', and for 'economy of resources'? To put it another way how would we know the extent of effectiveness or the extent of economy? (Even worse, how would we know we had reached maximum economy?)

Clearly this is a matter of making definitions which will be useful in our thinking about performance. I am by no means convinced that there has been sufficient discussion of definitions already proposed. If there had

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*The Problems of Civil Service Management, Sir Douglas Allen, *Management Services in Government*, 1977, February, pp 5–9.

been, some of them would by now have become standard or almost so. As it is there still seems to be some confusion about just what terms like efficiency, effectiveness, economy, productivity, cost-effectiveness, mean. And that is quite apart from the less familiar terms like those suggested by Currie*: 'value indicator', 'execution efficiency' and the like. (Incidentally, Currie uses the word 'effectiveness' but does not define it!)

It is only when one has made fairly tight definitions that one can begin to discuss some of the insights (or confusions) which stem from them. For example, many of us aim at being efficient, and consider effectiveness as being something to do with achievement of aims, but it may or may not be useful to consider a measure of 'effectiveness at being efficient'.

At a rather more refined level sustained study could I think involve the examination of a whole variety of problems associated with attempts at measuring performance. One would not necessarily be starting from scratch but bringing together in one coherent body much of the relevant experience and learning established elsewhere.

It is precisely because performance measurement is closely associated with management, accountability, objectives and all sorts of other things which are part and parcel of organisational activity that it has not been attacked as a subject in itself. Instead its problems have been dealt with by a series of glancing blows. But the discipline of number is a well-established one, and measurement is number. If measurement of performance were focused upon as a subject in its own right it could to a large extent be dealt with as I think it should be: as a numerical discipline intimately bound up with management and drawing upon the mass of numerical experience (and folk-lore) we already possess. Not that the numerical experience need come from any one source. It could be in part that of the planner, the economist, the statistician, the OR member, the work measurement man, or the manager.

Nor is it true that the numerical aspects complete the picture. It is clear for example that there are behavioural aspects. Currie says, in the article I have already quoted, 'Measures of activity can easily lead to wrong conclusions and can seriously distort the behaviour of the units themselves:

To measure the effectiveness of police or traffic examiners solely on the number of prosecutions undertaken might lead to those accountable directing their resources towards prosecutions which are easily accomplished (ie for petty offences by the law-abiding) as against prosecution for major and more-diffficult-to-prove offences.'

I agree with all that but would add that the 'distortions' need not be un-

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*Framing Targets for Accountability, B M Currie, *Management Services in Government*, 1978, August, pp 114–126.

desirable: it is not outside the realm of possibility that performance measures may be used behaviourally to get desired effects. Indeed incentive bonus schemes do just that, if they work properly.

In addition there are many other aspects. It is possible, for example, to envisage extensions of cost accounting ideas to the analysis of outputs (or results) as well as to inputs (or resources).

In an article of this kind I cannot go into detail on the form that sustained study might take. But to illustrate as succinctly as I can that there is sufficient difficulty to require sustained study, let me take a simple (or apparently simple!) operation, that of aggregation. It takes little reflection to conclude that aggregation occurs very widely in performance measurement. Any unit which produces a mixture of outputs, whether they be various domestic appliances or various social security cases dealt with, will need to aggregate those outputs in one or more ways, so as to summarise what it has been, is, or will be doing. Even if a unit needs only a single quantity to summarise its output, it only requires a series of such units in say a regional or area organisation to bring up the need for an aggregate figure which shows what groups of offices in various areas are about. We are all familiar to some extent with aggregations of resources consumed—that is the subject of costing. Aggregations of resources (which is one of the commonest of aggregations in government) are subject to all sorts of complications ranging from the problems of different kinds of money (capital versus current, now versus later) to the problems of different kinds of staff (where a trainee may count as less than a full member of staff).

In short, aggregations are applied to all sorts of inputs to, and outputs from, operations in a host of different ways. Having accepted that, we may still ask whether there is any constructive analysis we could make of the process of aggregation. Take the example of aggregating a particular quantity within a regional organisation. It may have been decided that certain measures of performance are of value to managers of individual offices, managers of areas, managers of regions and finally to headquarters. It may also have been decided to condense the information for, say a region by aggregating it over the various areas within that region. Is there anything we can say about the form of the quantity to be aggregated? The answer is yes.

The theory of index numbers had quite a lot to say about such matters. Although the detail is too great to go into here, there are a number of 'tests of perfection' of index numbers. Rather than quote any of these tests, one can adopt the idea of a 'test of perfection' and construct one's own test of whether a measure of performance is suitable for aggregation. The test I propose is, like many other such tests, fairly simple. If we are to obtain a measure relating to, say, an area by aggregating the corresponding quantity

for all offices in the area, then we can reasonably insist on the following kind of consistency:

If any two offices are amalgamated so that they are now one office, the value of the measure for the area must not change. Similarly if a single office is split into a number of sub-offices the aggregate value of the measure over all the sub-offices must give the same value as the measure for the office as a whole.

This simple rule puts a considerable constraint on the kind of measure that is considered 'perfect' and helps to avoid nonsenses. Of course one can avoid nonsenses without the aid of such tests, much as one can solve brain-teasers without the use of algebra. But a little formality can go a long way.

As another illustration of the form that sustained study might take, I return to the possibility of extension of cost accounting ideas. One technique in cost accounting is variance analysis. This is a means of analysing divergencies between planned and expected costs, profits or sales margins. Such analysis, it may be argued is essentially an analysis of inputs. Is there any way in which a corresponding analysis of outputs might be constructed, and would this be valuable in the analysis of variations in performance?

Conclusion

Not surprisingly my own conclusions are that performance measurement is, or at least should be, a discipline. Once it is recognised as such it may have a chance of taking off and becoming much more positively useful than hitherto.

INTERCOM: the Interdepartmental Communications System of the Future

Mrs B M Howard, Civil Service Department

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It was the Order in Council of 22 July 1920 which first announced that:

The Treasury may make regulations for controlling the conduct of His Majesty's Civil Establishments, and providing for the classification, remuneration, and other conditions of service of all persons employed therein, whether permanently or temporarily.

The 'regulations' were conveyed to other departments by means of Treasury Circulars (until 1949), Establishment Officer Circulars (1920–1949), Establishment Circulars (1949–1965), and 'Dear Establishment Officer' (DEO) Letters (1940–1972). It was not until 1944 that the then current post-1920 regulations were combined into the first edition of Estacode, of which two succeeding editions were published in 1948 and 1958. By 1972 the increasing complexities of the employment protection legislation led to the setting up of a new 'communications' system, the mainstay of which is the Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code, looseleaf volumes which set out the basis of employment in the Civil Service. There is also the looseleaf Establishment Officers' Guide, plus General Circulars which hold material awaiting codification and a series of General Notices for ephemeral material. Estacode Circulars (of which about a dozen still remain current) were introduced in 1972 to keep the older code ticking over while the new system was being constructed; Industrial Memoranda, dating from 1948, cover items of interest to industrial civil servants. (The Civil Service Department also issues many specialist Handbooks and sub-series of Notices which may in time be susceptible to similar editorial treatment to that discussed in this article).

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The system of written administrative instructions and guidance which flows from the Civil Service Department (CSD) to other departments is complex: any given topic may be covered in one, or all, or any combination of the 12 series of communications listed above. Until recently there was no available guidance as to which documents continued to be current, and no up-to-date indexes. The amount of material issued each year is formidable; in 1980 there were 93 amendments to the Civil Service Code, 32 to the Establishment Officers' Guide, in addition to 127 separate documents of general importance—to say nothing of those of specialist (eg computing or training) interest.

The editorial programme, described below, is part of a continuing programme of development and improvement which it is hoped will make the system increasingly effective. Recent activities have been directed towards converting a seemingly disparate mass of items into a structured system so that information can be more easily retrieved. The first part of this article describes the editorial work connected with the present paper-based documentation; the second section takes a look into the future, into an electronic Establishments Office.

Indexing

It was decided that the first editorial priority was to bring up to date the indexes to the Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code ('the Code') and to the Establishment Officers' Guide ('the Guide'). A professional librarian therefore set to work and the new Code index was issued in autumn 1980, followed in spring 1981 by that to the Guide.

But whilst these two indexes were being compiled by the traditional method of transcribing entries by hand on to cards, the CSD library and the department's Computer Applications Branch were considering the possibility of using a computer to produce a speedy index to the Civil Service Department's General Notices and General Circulars. Software was identified and the first such index was distributed to departments in February 1981. Computer manipulation of the data has proved highly convenient since the indexing 'string' has only to be keyboarded once, with the necessary tags attached; the result is a KWAC (Key Word And Context) index, which is printed out in two sequences: chronological and subject.

Terminology control

As part of the process of integrating the mass of establishment documents into a unified information system, it was important that all the indexes should be compatible and be based on a common vocabulary. For this reason, all the terms used in indexing have been carefully listed, synonyms noted and a reference structure gradually built up. What started as a simple

wordlist is therefore developing into a thesaurus. Care has been taken to include in it the traditional Civil Service terms of art since users will inevitably look for information in this specialised form of jargon.

The thesaurus has three purposes: the first is to ensure that the same concept is described in the same phraseology wherever it occurs, and thus that like is brought together with like; the second is the convenience of users so that they may become accustomed to a standard terminology; the third anticipates a keyword index to a possible computer-based text retrieval system.

Identification of current material

Departments have expressed the need for guidance as to the currency of interdepartmental written communications. Faced with a mass of paper and fearing that over the years their records have become disordered, they have asked that CSD should issue checklists.

To meet this demand, a schedule has been issued showing which Circulars and Notices are considered to be current; considerable effort is also being put into isolating extant DEO letters, Establishment Circulars, and other older-type material; additional work is in hand to identify those Industrial Memoranda which are now valid. In due course a composite chronological list and index to all these items will be published. For the Code and the Guide 'state of the volume' tabulations have been prepared, which will be kept updated.

Before too long therefore there will be an identified corpus of about 3,000 A4 pages of current communications—that is to say that a database will exist—in paper form.

Consolidation of indexes

There are now three indexes to that database covering (a) the Code, (b) the Guide and (c) current Circulars, etc. It has been suggested (CSD General Notice 81/9) that users should file them in the same looseleaf binder so as to produce a desk-drawer 'Concordance'. The next editorial step might be to consolidate these three indexes into one sequence which could be updated by the issue of replacement pages. Unfortunately however the indexing has increased the problems of 'control' of the documentation. CSD's communications are very volatile: in 1980, some 504 new items were issued, others were cancelled and a number ceased to be current. The 300 pages of index will therefore quickly become out of date and will require frequent replacement—thus adding to the not inconsiderable mountain of paper now circulating in departments.

The future

What is the alternative to issuing replacement pages for the indexes? Not to bother updating them? Not to print them but instead to set up a telephone enquiry point within CSD? Or to hold the indexes on-line in a computer system?

But why stop at the indexes? Why not convert all the communications into an electronically stored full-text retrieval system? Lawyers, economists, doctors, statisticians—to name but a few—are becoming increasingly accustomed to using interactive dial-up facilities. Would it be too fantastic to envisage the day when Establishment Divisions and individual civil servants could have terminals to interrogate INTERCOM, the CSD interdepartmental communications database?

Two developments—the microprocessor and telecommunications advances—are creating new possibilities for the storage and retrieval of information. Computer-based systems can cross reference between various documents, can permit the speedy updating of texts, can provide up-to-the-minute information, and can quickly identify material which is specific to an enquiry. Their indexes are always completely up to date. Above all, they liberate office workers from handling and filing all those sheets and sheets of paper—which 'may come in useful' but which often cannot be found when they are needed. All these facilities are very relevant to INTERCOM.

A change from a paper-based documentation to a computer system could not take place without the full agreement of all parties. Nevertheless, just for interest, let us take a look at what the technical possibilities might be, and also roughly work out some of the costs of the present system.

Among the means of mounting INTERCOM could be an on-line system accessed through terminals, or the use of videotex. With both systems the existing data could be captured and reformatted as necessary; new text would continue, as now, to be keyboarded; users would have to acquire the necessary receivers. Before any implementation could take place, the many sub-strategies of all possible systems could require detailed examination and costing.

An on-line information system

There already exist many on-line information bases available for public or for private remote access by means of terminals which may be operated on dedicated lines or over the public switched telephone network. If CSD decided to use this method of mounting INTERCOM, it would either set up its own service based on a government minicomputer or, alternatively, could supply its files to a commercial information service who would provide the means of access, guarantee security and lease its retrieval/storage capacity for on-line use.

Among the present full-text retrieval systems are ICL's STATUS, IBM's STAIRS, and CII's MISTRAL. The usual means of accessing text is by combining a series of keywords which are then coupled by means of Boolean operators: AND, OR and NOT being the commonest. Beyond this the systems differ in technical details, in functions and in the commands used but all require a sophisticated and at times elegant approach to the problems of retrieving information.

This technology does not immediately commend itself for INTERCOM since the present systems are necessarily complex and require experienced operators. If INTERCOM is to replace the present paper-based documentation, it must be suitable for use by the average office worker, with the minimum of instruction; it must retrieve information quickly without the mechanics of the system constituting either a psychological or a technical barrier to the user.

Videotex

Videotex (or Viewdata) is a computer-based system designed primarily for simplicity of use by untrained personnel—for the least sophisticated householder to use via his domestic television set. This ease of retrieval is possibly one of its greatest advantages for INTERCOM. The training required to operate a videotex receiver is negligible and, while the user does become more adept as time goes by, the novice is at less of a disadvantage than the clerk searching a series of manuals or a VDU operator with a full keyboard and control keys. Another attraction for INTERCOM is its immediacy: within minutes of keyboarding, a new message can be retrieved by all users of the system.

Today's user of videotex controls the area of the database to be searched by pressing keys on a keypad; this allows him to make a choice from a number of alternatives displayed on the screen of his receiver. Once a frame number is known, the user can go straight to it, without tracking through the hierarchical system. But so fast is the technology advancing that before too long even these basic procedures will have been further enhanced. Screens will be touch sensitive so that the user will not even need a keypad to change the information on display. The hierarchical method of indexing will be replaceable by a keyword system.

Receivers will be linked to microcomputers, thus providing memories, text storage devices and an automatic directory of often-used frames. Printers will be integral parts of the hardware so that print-outs can be obtained of selected paragraphs. The difficulties of scanning a number of pages via a screen—likened to reading *The Times* through a keyhole—will be overcome by dividing the screen into different areas. A 'news flash' service will highlight recently input information.

INTERCOM could be mounted on videotex in at least three different ways:

- by using a reserved area within the British public video network: PRESTEL
- by running on other specifically designated videotex systems operated by commercial companies, or by other government departments
- by CSD setting up a corporate database which could be accessed either directly or through a gateway linked to the packet switching system (PSS).

The possibilities of all these alternatives would need full examination but the inherent simplicity of operation of videotex would make it a very attractive vehicle for INTERCOM.

Costs of the present system

Because technology is advancing so rapidly and because this article is merely pointing to various possibilities, it would not be practical to attempt any detailed costing, particularly since one can only estimate on the basis of today's technology—which may be obsolete by tomorrow. What one can do however is to take a superficial look at the costs of the present system.

In 1980, CSD issued 504 separate items (ie the total number of different General Notices, General Circulars, Industrial Memoranda, Code and Guide Memoranda), of which 25,700 copies were distributed in bulk to 1,680 addresses. The present annual cost of printing and dispatching these documents is about £100,000. (This figure does not include staff time spent in drafting, or in keyboarding, since these operations would continue in a mechanised system). The expense of distributing the material to individual recipients in departments, plus their reading time, plus filing costs, have been very crudely assessed at an annual cost of £200,000* at 1980 salary rates. That is to say that what in a computer system would be 'storage'—the processes between keyboarding and retrieval—in 1980 cost (very roughly) about £300,000 for a manual system. This cost will not of course remain static. These costs do not take account of present retrieval expenses, of staff time spent flapping through page after page for information which 'must be here somewhere'. It is also perhaps worth commenting that today's users must perforce receive and store all documents: there is no scope for selectivity and for the operation of a personalised dissemination of information service based on individual-interest profiles. It is therefore possible that a considerable proportion of the

*This sum is arrived at on the basis of: *(a)* 15 minutes of Clerical Assistant time at 1,680 addresses in circulating 504 bulk deliveries to individual offices; *(b)* 15 minutes reading time per 25,700 documents, on the assumption that each is read by a Senior Executive Officer and Higher Executive Officer and an Executive Officer; that 10 per cent are also read by a Principal, and 5 per cent by an Assistant Secretary; *(c)* five minutes Clerical Officer time in filing 25,700 documents.

annual expenditure is nugatory, supplying unwanted copies of the whole to persons who only need a sub-set.

Finally

It seems to me to be demonstrably more effective for INTERCOM to be held in a computer store so that an individual can retrieve information WHEN (and only when) it is really required, rather than for him to be continually putting effort into collecting paper IN CASE it may one day come in useful. What do you think?

Form Design in the Department of Health and Social Security

Michael J Took

Michael Took is a Principal in Supplementary Benefits I Division of the Department of Health and Social Security with a responsibility for communications aspects of Supplementary Benefits work — *Editor.*

Introduction

No organisation can afford to be complacent about the way it communicates with its clients. In administering social security benefits, good communications are particularly important because failure can lead to people being denied their rights and to wrong payments of benefit being made.

The Supplementary Benefits Commission, until its demise late last year, was very concerned that supplementary benefits communications should be as simple and intelligible as possible. This is no mean task considering the complicated nature of the scheme. Accordingly, it welcomed the opportunity to use the services of the Salford Form Market to test a revised version of the main introductory leaflet to supplementary benefits (leaflet SB1) and, later, to re-write and re-design 11 of the most used supplementary benefits forms.

Salford Form Market was, from 1976 to 1979, an advice centre in Greater Manchester. It is mainly concerned with the use of language on forms and their design. It felt that poor forms contributed to the failure by people to claim benefits to which they were entitled. Its founder members, Martin Cutts and Chrissie Maher, now spearhead the 'Plain English' campaign in conjunction with the National Consumer Council.

Leaflet SB1

The original leaflet was rather a drab effort set out on eight pages. It contained too much detail about the supplementary benefits scheme for what was meant to be a leaflet to encourage people to claim benefit to

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which they were entitled. All it needed to cover was who qualifies, what they will get and how to claim.

The revised version produced in 1977 was a considerable improvement. It was half the size of the earlier version. Salford Form Market printed and tested the revised leaflet. The results of the testing were encouraging. With a few minor changes, the leaflet was then printed for general use. Few subsequent changes have been needed.

Re-designing forms

In 1978 Salford Form Market started to re-design 11 of the most frequently used supplementary benefits forms (see Annex for details). They obtained valuable co-operation from staff at two local DHSS offices, claimants and adult literacy students.

The existing versions of the forms were fairly conventional. They had the following characteristics

(i) single-colour printing

(ii) words emphasised by block capitals or heavier printing

(iii) started 'Dear Sir or Madam' and ended 'yours faithfully'

(iv) most had at the top of the form 'Department of Health and Social Security', space for the local office address, office reference number and the date, the DHSS crest and

(v) light-weight paper.

The forms produced by Salford Form Market

(i) used heavier white paper

(ii) used simpler wording

(iii) normally had two colours (yellow and blue)

(iv) had simple illustrations in some of them

(v) had an algorithm in one of them

(vi) did not formally address claimants

(vii) had address boxes at the bottom

(viii) used sticky labels for the local office address, and

(ix) used bolder printing with much more variation in size.

Testing the forms

The Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (RICA) tested the new versions by comparing them with those currently in use. However, they were not able to test all the new versions. The intention was that RICA should investigate areas of forms which caused particular difficulties for users—both claimants and DHSS staff—and to identify any problems which were common to a number of forms. The main aim was for RICA to prepare some general guidelines for future simplification of DHSS forms.

For testing the forms, RICA chose to measure the success of any simplification by considering the relative impact, readability, comprehensibility, user attitudes and ease of processing the forms. The original version of the 11 forms and the new version of eight of them were tested through individual in-depth interviews on one or other of the forms with 320 supplementary benefit claimants from two local offices, and in 10 group discussions with staff from supplementary benefit and unemployment benefit offices. Some of the forms were tested in actual, or simulated, 'in use' situations, and where this involved completion by the claimant (A9, A235 and B1) they were analysed for mistakes. Certain 'user' statistics were collected, such as the number of forms completed, the number completed correctly, and the achievement of specific objectives eg the number of effective appointments. In addition to considering the forms in use, RICA carried out certain other 'non use' tests eg for readability. The general points to emerge from RICA's study of the forms revised by Salford Form Market were that

(i) in general, the re-designed forms fared better in the tests than the old, although there was still room for improvement

(ii) most work remains to be done on the forms which the claimant has to fill in

(iii) use of algorithms did not help where a form was already quite simple

(iv) second colours made little difference for most claimants and staff found them distracting

(v) illustrations should not be used unless they add to or replace part of the text

(vi) no objections were made by claimants about dropping the formal salutation.

Guidelines

RICA produced the following set of guidelines for simplifying supplementary benefit documents in the future

- Find out what the document is for and whether it is really needed. Make sure no other documents overlap in purpose
- Ask for the views of the staff using the document and if possible observe it in use (including common mistakes if it is a self-completion document)
- Assess comprehension of and detailed attitudes towards the document using a small group of claimants who receive the document. That is, find out 'if', 'why' and 'where' the document needs improving
- With this information and that from other studies on the words which are best understood, re-write the document, bearing in mind the information needed from it

- Use readability scores where possible to check whether the resultant wording has reduced the difficulty of the original. If it has not, try again
- Take all this information to the designer who will decide on paper size, type-face and layout—again make sure he/she is aware of the literature on the topic. Discuss, with the designer, envelope size and office practice so that the new document will not cause problems in this area. Also discuss topics such as impact and the relative importance of the different parts of the document. Avoid change for its own sake
- Try out the new document on claimants and staff
- Go back and re-design it if it is still causing problems
- Try it out again before putting it into use.

What next?

Salford Form Market provided a fresh approach to forms design and we have been given a sound basis upon which to improve supplementary benefit forms. We have already used some of their ideas in re-designing forms, particularly form B2/3, which was criticised strongly in 'Gobbledegook', which was issued by the National Consumer Council, last year.

The department is actively considering how best to improve its communications. The work done by the Salford Form Market has provided a valuable input for this.

ANNEX

DOCUMENTS USED IN THE STUDY

DOCUMENT	FUNCTION
A16B	Letter notifying claimants of a home visit from the social security local office
A165	Letter notifying claimants of a local office appointment
S3	Notice of entitlement
SP3/1C	Notice of entitlement sent to retirement pensioners
R2	Notice sent out with order books to inform claimants of a general increase in supplementary benefits rates
A9	A form used by claimants to contact the local office about anything. Sent with his order book for him to keep until needed
A234A	Letter sent with form A234 to explain function of form
A234	A postal review form sent to long term claimants to ascertain their present circumstances
A235	Postal claim form. Used instead of office or home interview to ascertain claimants' circumstances
B1	A supplementary benefits claim form for unemployed people. The first page explains what to do with the completed form and if need is urgent
B2/3	A notice to unemployed claimants showing the payment they will receive. Also contains notes on other benefits

Individual Career Planning

Richard S Williams

Richard Williams is a Senior Psychologist in the Personnel Management Research Branch of the Civil Service Department. From August 1978 until March 1979, as holder of a Civil Service (Nuffield and Leverhulme) Travelling Fellowship, he carried out a study of North American career development practices. The outcome of the study is reported in a forthcoming HMSO publication entitled *Career Management and Career Planning*. This article concentrates on one particular aspect of career management and planning, namely individual career planning (ICP) — *Editor*.

Introduction

Several North American authorities have claimed that in recent years organisations have become increasingly interested in career development. Several inter-related reasons have been suggested to account for this growth, for example

- —employees at all levels with organisations are demanding to have more of a say in the direction in which their careers take
- —social values are changing: people have become more concerned about the quality of their working life; and to achieve a satisfactory balance of the various elements of their lives
- —government intervention in the form of equal employment opportunity legislation and affirmative action pressures have increased
- —people are, in general, better educated and they have higher occupational aspirations
- —economic growth is slower and there are fewer advancement opportunities
- —rapid technological advances mean that many jobs are changing or disappearing and there is a need for re-training or re-education
- —the achievement of growth and productivity in organisations is dependent upon effective human performance: a career development programme can contribute to increased personal satisfaction, motivation and performance.

Many of the issues and concerns listed above are ones with which we are familiar here in Great Britain. So, for example, there is evidence that people want participation with their supervisors on job-related issues and that increases in participation can enhance individual well-being at work. By

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analogy, it might be inferred from this evidence about direct participation that people want to have more say in decisions over their career development. Such participation may lead to a better person-job match with consequent benefits to the individual and the organisation.

The apparent desire for greater participation in career decision-making is one example of the more general changes in social values and the increasing concern about the quality of working life and the place of work in the overall quality of life of the individual. To some extent this concern is reflected in recent legislation, such as that on health and safety at work or equal opportunities. In Canada and (even more so) in the United States equal opportunities legislation and regulations have been implemented with great vigour and many organisations now recognise that equal employment opportunity means good personnel practice for all, not just minorities and women.

Whilst the statements listed above may well be good reasons why organisations *ought* to be interested in career management and planning it often has been the case that the introduction of a career planning programme was prompted by a particular management-perceived problem. For example, some organisations introduced career planning programmes (and other activities) to help provide better career opportunities for women and minority employees whilst other organisations responded to the need to help employees about to be made redundant.

A wide range of practices may be categorised under the general rubric of career management and planning. On the one hand there are the traditional activities to do with recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, training and development, job transfers and promotion. Without doubt these are the fundamental elements in career management and planning and many organisations have sought to strengthen their activities in these areas. On the other hand, some organisations have extended their range of activities by introducing individual career planning programmes. Often these new programmes began in a small way—for example, help for employees being made redundant—but subsequently their scope was broadened.

Even though a management problem led to the career planning programme in many organisations this was not true in every case: in some there was a genuine concern to help individuals have more influence over the direction of their careers. As one organisation puts it: 'The responsibility for an employee's career planning is placed on his or her shoulders . . . with management offering help and guidance.'

Even though individuals themselves are being encouraged to assume much of the responsibility for their career planning (on the grounds that individuals have ultimately to make the choices and accept the consequences) there is general agreement that some of the responsibility

remains with management—both line and staff—if only because one of the broad aims of most career planning programmes is to do with meeting organisational goals. There is no disguising the fact, therefore, that some element of organisational self-interest underlies these programmes. Management support may take many forms and this article will illustrate the sorts of help, eg workbooks, workshops, which organisations have provided to help employees with their career planning.

What is individual career planning?

Whilst there is no single universally accepted definition of individual career planning there is some degree of consensus that it is a *personal* process which entails generating information about one's self—eg strengths and weaknesses, interests—and about career opportunities as a basis for establishing career goals which are achieved through the implementation of career plans.

There is general agreement that long-term career goals should not, indeed cannot be, very specific. David Campbell, in his book *If You Don't Know Where You're Going You'll Probably End Up Somewhere Else,* (Niles, Ill; Argus Communications, 1974) states: 'Although you should develop some overall idea of what you are after don't try to plan long range goals in detail, because too many changes will come along.' Medium-term goals are ones which the individual may be able to influence—for example, what knowledge and skills can I reasonably expect to acquire through, say, training and experience in the next five years or so?

Individuals should avoid setting goals which are over-specific (eg 'I want to be the head of my department by the time I am 35') because the goal may be unrealistic and if it is not met great disappointment may result. In the shorter term (the coming year) much more specific and realistic goals can be set: goal-setting of this kind is a feature of many staff appraisal programmes. As the time-frame shortens still further, from months to weeks and on down to hours and minutes, so can goals become still more specific and individuals can have much more control over these goals. Short-term planning on a day-to-day basis sometimes is called 'time-management' and there are now several books on this important subject. In addition to being specific and realistic, 'good' goals should be useful, challenging, measureable and action-oriented.

Methods of helping employees with their career planning

Appraisal schemes

Some practitioners have argued that the basis for career planning should be the present job. Thus, one authority states, 'If career information focuses on personal development, work content and job importance rather than

promotability, potential and career ladders, career planning can help to create more realistic expectations and help minimise career dissatisfaction.' This view is reflected in many appraisal programmes which frequently include amongst their objectives the improvement of employee performance and the identification of potential and of individual training and development needs.

Appraisal schemes have a potentially major contribution to make to individual career planning. Such schemes normally are intended to help people understand how well they are performing in their jobs and this kind of information—knowledge of work related strengths and weaknesses—is a fundamental requirement for individual career planning. This information may then serve as a basis for some measure of short-term career planning within the framework of the present job. In a number of organisations managers are also expected to take responsibility for discussing their subordinates' career plans beyond the present job.

Self-study materials

A number of organisations use workbooks or similar self-study materials, either separately or in conjunction with other activities, in their career planning programmes. Though such workbooks are aimed mainly at career planning they recognise that this planning has to be set in the context of the individual's life as a whole.

Most of the workbooks encourage the individual to seek the help of others (eg the spouse, the boss, a friend) in completing at least some of the exercises. Discussions with another person may provide helpful feedback to enable the individual to test the reality of self-assessments, goals and plans. Also, most workbooks stress that whatever action plans are set, they have to be put into effect, their implementation monitored, and reviewed as required. Thus career planning is seen as a regular activity rather than as something which takes place once a year or once every few years.

Career planning workshops

In career planning workshops the general approach followed is much the same as that outlined earlier: self-analysis, identification of opportunities, goal-setting, and planning. However, whilst there is some outline similarity there is wide diversity in workshop format and in the specific content of workshops. Thus, some are short one or two day events, others are longer and last about five days. Still others are 'part-time' workshops, requiring several days of work time but spread over a period of some weeks.

Workbooks or other self-study materials usually feature prominently in the workshop and some include paper-and-pencil questionnaires of vocational interests in particular and possibly of other attributes. Some workshops incorporate personal counselling sessions. Group exercises and discussions are especially significant as these facilitate the interchange of

ideas and information. Such activities help also to provide a supportive atmosphere in which participants, who share similar concerns, may work together.

Information about career plans and opportunities

The medium most widely used by organisations to provide career information is the written word. Many organisations have what is known as a 'job posting' system in which a bulletin is issued to employees informing them of job vacancies. The bulletin may be distributed in any one or more of several ways: displayed on notice boards, sent to all employees covered by the postings scheme, etc. Frequency of circulation varies from organisation to organisation. The description of the vacancy is usually relatively short, giving such details as the job title, salary or grade, and a summary of the main duties. The coverage of job posting schemes varies: in some the scheme applies only to relatively junior levels of employee, in others it extends up to middle management or thereabouts, and in still others all grades are included. Coverage may also vary in regard to location, eg in headquarters only, in certain operating units only, throughout the whole of the company in all geographical locations, etc.

This approach, therefore, gives individuals a snapshot picture of vacancies available at a certain period in time. Beyond this, several organisations have been developing booklets and other materials to provide individuals with broader information about job and career opportunities throughout the organisation. Thus, a number are developing series of information booklets about career opportunities; in one organisation, for example, there is a booklet about opportunities in clerical and related jobs such as office trainee, clerk typist. The booklet lists the main duties, required qualifications, promotion opportunities; the essential points are also summarised in a diagrammatic career ladder. The booklet includes advice on enhancing experience, qualifications and promotability. Other organisations have chosen to adopt a still more comprehensive approach by developing charts or catalogues describing all positions within the organisation. These may also incorporate diagrams showing possible career paths.

One or two organisations make use of films or video tapes to provide information about opportunities or the career planning programme. Another approach, adopted by a few organisations, is to call upon experienced and knowledgeable employees to act as sources of information or volunteer advisers. One organisation, which is developing a new career development programme, plans to invite carefully selected executives to make presentations to staff about the day-to-day tasks, necessary or helpful training and experience, the opportunities for advancement, etc that are associated with their field of work.

Computers can be used to provide information about career opportunities and various systems exist in Canada and the United States. Generally speaking these systems have been developed for use in schools, colleges and universities, but other kinds of organisations have made use of them. A computer-based careers guidance system has been developed and field-tested for use in the US Army's officer career management programme although a decision has not yet been taken on whether it should be adopted for operational use.

Perhaps the most traditional use for computers is as a means of keeping employee records. In a couple of organisations this kind of usage has been extended and information from employees about their career goals and plans is kept on file. Employees are invited to prepare career plans (materials to help with this are provided) and then submit those plans to management. The plans are held on the computer file and drawn upon by management when, say, a vacancy needs to be filled or when an individual's career is being reviewed by management.

The outcome of career planning programmes

Many of the career planning programmes encountered by the author were quite new and had been running for just a short period of time. In a few organisations the programme (in one form or another) had been operating for some years and in one or two of these attempts had been made to evaluate the programmes. The findings allow an appreciation of what can realistically be expected from career planning programmes of the kinds which exist at present and the findings go some way towards overcoming the fears which managements express about career planning in particular and career development more generally.

Some companies have undertaken surveys to find out how employees feel about the career development resources being provided. Generally speaking these surveys suggest that a significant proportion of employees feel that they want more help. However, once a programme is in operation the take-up is not especially high. Companies nonetheless seem satisfied with the relatively low response rate. It has certain advantages in that the programmes remain manageable and it perhaps goes some way to assuage management fears that existing systems will be swamped by hordes of employees demanding extra training and development facilities. This is not to say, of course, that there has been no demand for such facilities. Indeed, one of the clearest outcomes of career planning activities has been enrolment by an appreciable proportion of participants in courses intended to upgrade their existing skills or acquire new ones to fit them for other areas of work.

What has not happened, though, is increased turbulence amongst staff. Quite a few employees made some changes to their job duties within their

existing department but the numbers moving to other departments have been relatively small. This then tends to argue against another management fear that great numbers of employees will want to move to new jobs. In a couple of organisations it is felt that where job changes do take place the career planning activity has contributed to a better job-person fit.

Perhaps the clearest findings relate to the reactions of participants and their managers concerning the career planning activity. Participants commonly report that

- through the career planning activity they were able to reach a better understanding of their values, interests, abilities and other personal characteristics
- they felt a greater sense of personal responsibility for their career planning and development
- they became more aware of what they could control and the available opportunities
- they became more aware of what they could not control, eg the various personnel policies, organisational structures, and the like, which act as constraints or barriers
- they felt better able to engage in discussions with their bosses about their jobs and their careers and they felt that the quality of such discussions was improved
- they felt better able to resolve job-career-family concerns.

Generally speaking, participants' managers endorse all of these reactions. In particular, managers feel that discussions with their subordinates about jobs and careers are improved and this is especially true for managers who have themselves undertaken some kind of career planning activity. In addition, some managers thought that there had been a positive change in subordinates' morale/attitude to work.

So, for managements concerned that the provision of career planning facilities will lead to increased employee turnover, raised expectations, and such like, these findings are reassuring. There was a general recognition of the risk of raising expectations which had to be guarded against. However, the feeling within organisations was that the career planning programmes had not raised employees' expectations; rather, the belief was that, if anything, employees acquired a more realistic picture of their present circumstances and future prospects. Because of the relative newness of most programmes the longer-term consequences have yet to become apparent but, from what is known, there is no reason to suppose that deleterious effects will result. Though modest the overall outcomes of career planning programmes have been beneficial both for organisations and for their employees.

Book Reviews

Bureaumetrics: quantitative comparison of British central government agencies by Christopher Hood and Andrew Dunsire (Gower; 1981; 280 pages; £15).

The last few years have been a time of relative stability in the machinery of government. Compared with the decade which began in the mid-1960s, there is now more stress on the costs of large-scale change, more of a feeling that people should concentrate on improving efficiency within the existing structure.

It is interesting, therefore, to encounter a book which concerns itself directly with some of the 'classic' machinery of government issues—for example the allocation of responsibilities between departments—and which does so in a novel way. *Bureaumetrics* is the culmination of a three-year project at the University of York. Written by two of the leading academic authorities in this field, it is a work which commands attention.

The book springs from an explicit dissatisfaction with the way in which the organisation of British central government is customarily discussed. This discussion is, the authors argue, characterised by a low level of analysis, by undue secrecy and generally by what they call the 'seat of the pants' approach. They believe that quantitative techniques of measurement and analysis are applicable here as elsewhere in the social sciences. What they term 'bureaumetrics'—a conscious neologism—is an attempt to demystify the machinery of government by systematic measurement and the use of statistical techniques of comparison, in other words by methodology associated with physical sciences or at least with the harder social sciences like economics. As the blurb proclaims, 'Bureaumetrics is to bureaucratic theory what econometrics is to economic theory.'

Part I discusses the general technique and sets out what the authors intend to examine. They take as their basic unit of analysis the department of central government. Perhaps surprisingly, this turns out to be the first major difficulty. British administrative history is, of course, characterised by continuity, conservatism and the internal regulation of the executive by means of prerogative powers rather than statutory codes. As a result, central government consists of a miscellaneous jumble of units, in which the main departments are followed by a long tail of bodies whose status is obscure and far from uniform. Thus the 69 bodies treated as 'government departments' for the purposes of this book are a very mixed bag, including not only the great departments of state but also such peculiarly British animals as the Trustee Museums, the Commonwealth War Graves Com-

mission and the Forestry Commission—not to speak of two departments (Price Commission and the Exchequer Office) which have been wound up since the book was written. Apart from the definitional difficulties, the sheer diversity of these 69 bodies serves to complicate the task of comparison and, arguably, to qualify its results.

Part II uses published sources of data to measure and classify the assembled government departments and their activities. Chapter Four, for example, is concerned with agency size and administrative structure. It attempts to measure a number of features—specialisation, 'expertness', dispersion, associated bodies, hierarchy—in order to produce an overall quantified description, expressed in terms of 'structure indices'. These measures include, for example, the number of distinct promotion ladders in each department, the average height of each hierarchy, and the percentage of staff in particular pay bands. Thus far the terrain is not entirely unfamiliar. Chapter Five, however, breaks new ground in attempting to construct measures of what the authors call 'political salience', using such indicators as continuity of funding, the number of adjournment debates and parliamentary questions, and political exposure as shown by the number of articles relating to the department which appeared on the front page of *The Times* over a four-year period. This is one of the least convincing chapters. Undeterred by the fragility of such indicators, the authors turn in Chapter Six to measures of the administrative environment. In this field departments are compared in terms of predictability (as shown by a department's ability to forecast its own expenditure), financial self-sufficiency, the closeness of their policy relations with other departments, and the nature of their contacts with an external clientele. As in the other chapters, the principal components are analysed using statistical techniques of correlation.

Having assembled this data, Hood and Dunsire consider in Chapter Seven how far administrative structure can be predicted by reference to size, environment, technology and the other variables which were identified earlier. Chapter Eight then attempts an empirical classification of departments into groups and sub-groups, in order to test how this compares with a map which might be drawn intuitively or *ad hoc*.

Part III consists of three exercises in applied bureaumetrics, undertaken mainly as an attempt to develop technique and to test how illuminating the approach is in practice. Thus Chapter Nine considers the question of portfolio allocation and specifically the 'Treasury—Civil Service Department question'—a chapter clearly written some time ago and therefore weakened (through no fault of the authors) by the absence of any reference to developments in 1980 and the publication of a detailed official study of the cost and benefits of merger. Chapter Ten broadens the units of analysis to take in a number of non-departmental public bodies and examines whether differences in constitutional type are associated with other administrative

properties (location, policy field, structure, etc). Finally Chapter Eleven looks in detail at the Scottish departments.

What is the practitioner to make of all this? He will, of course, be struck by the unfamiliarity of the techniques, compared with the historical and descriptive way in which the organisation of British central government is normally taught and discussed. His first reaction might either be to dismiss the approach out of hand or to point to the many holes which could be picked in individual indicators. This reaction would, indeed, come as no surprise to the authors, who refer rather acidly (p 237) to the '(at best) indifference among administrative "potentates" (particularly in government) towards research that is not seen as immediately "relevant", in the sense of serving the purposes of those who direct the organisation under inquiry'. A more considered reaction is, however, merited in view of the authors' undoubted learning and their emphasis that the book is only a start.

The claims of the book are modest in one sense, ambitious in another. The authors are quick to recognise that solutions to problems of organisation are political, not technocratic or scientific, and that bureaumetrics is by no means the only way to study the subject. That said, they are in no doubt that the technique has a wide variety of applications and should be taken forward by further studies, for example, in performance measurement and in analysis over time.

In assessing these claims, the civil servant has a fairly straightforward test to apply: what prescriptive force, actual or potential, does this technique possess? Hood and Dunsire suggest that numerical comparators 'may have some usefulness' in supplementing the 'seat of the pants' style. Judged even by this undemanding criterion, the operational conclusions reached in *Bureaumetrics* are disappointing. The main prescriptive implication in Part II, for example, is that 'there appears to be a high degree of strategic choice . . . available to those responsible for designing government bureaucracies'. The empirical classification exercise in Chapter Eight results in a division of departments into three main types—ministerial departments (financially and structurally complex and politically salient), small ministerial departments, and the fringe, with Ministry of Defence in a category of its own. But this is scarcely a novel categorisation or one which has any obvious operational implications. Nor do the authors seem confident of the utility of their findings, admitting rather disarmingly 'Who would find such categories useful, we cannot say.'

Even with a conscious effort to put aside an over-defensive reaction, it is still difficult on the evidence presented here to be confident that bureaumetric techniques are likely to be of great practical use in a field which is so inherently and properly political and in which personal and non-quantifiable factors are of the essence. That is not to deny a role for

quantification or a disciplined empirical approach—as in the CSD-Treasury study of 1980. It is, however, to question whether practical discussions are likely to be informed by the elaborate statistical constructs which bureaumetrics threatens to employ, or by an approach which makes no allowance for chance, perhaps the most potent of all influences.
D J Howells

Understanding Organisations by Charles B Handy (Penguin; 1976 (reprinted 1981); 480 pages; £3·50).

Handy's *Understanding Organisations* was first published in 1976 and has now been reprinted with a new concluding chapter. To some the title might suggest that the book is about organisational structures and systems. These topics certainly are covered but the book is as much about the behaviour of people within organisations as is evident from several chapter titles, eg 'On the motivation to work', 'On leadership'.

The book has three parts. The first introduces a number of concepts relevant to the study of organisations: a couple of chapter titles have been mentioned already and others are 'On power and influence', 'On cultures and structures' and 'On politics and the management of differences'.

Part Two is concerned to show how the concepts may be applied to various organisational issues and problems which Handy groups under four headings: the people in the organisation; the work of the organisation; the systems in the organisation; the job of a manager. This part also contains the new chapter—'On the future of organisations'. In this chapter Handy outlines a number of assumptions which he feels are in need of reconsideration: for example he suggests that the assumption 'That hierarchy is natural' is now less valid than it once was and the assumption 'That labour is a cost', he feels, has been reversed. He suggests that labour should be treated as an asset. He also outlines some clues to the future (eg the communications revolution) and speculates on three possibilities and problems for organisations, *viz,* the federal organisation, spliced careers, new patterns of planning. It is unlikely that everyone will agree with what Handy has to say about the future, especially as some of the ideas presented represent a radical departure from conventional thinking, but they none the less merit serious consideration.

Throughout the book there are 'boxes' which, in some instances, contain illustrative material, definitions, or research findings in support of the text. Handy also encourages readers to try and learn from the book by better understanding (through diagnosis) themselves and organisations and some of the 'boxes' therefore contain exercises intended to help with this. A few pages in the introductory chapter suggest to managers (the primary intended audience) how they might learn from the book and Part Three—'A

guide to further study'—includes references for each chapter and some further discussion of concepts and assumptions.

Though admittedly selective in its coverage it represents an excellent introduction to the field and readers who are sufficiently interested are referred to a good selection of other sources if they wish to delve more deeply into particular areas. The book therefore is to be commended to managers of all kinds; to line managers, and management services and organisation specialists.

Richard S Williams

Computer Installations for Government Departments

A list of all Government computers as at 1 January 1981 was published as a supplement to the May 1981 edition. Details of computers ordered during the period 1 January to 31 March 1981 are shown in the following table.

Date of Order	Department[1]	Location	Main Uses	Manufacturer[2] and Type of Computer
1B Computers on order for administrative and general purposes				
February 1981	CSD	Sunningdale	Training	DEC PDP 11/34A
February 1981	MOD (Air)	Wattisham	Management of engineering resources	Prime 550
March 1981	Cabinet Office	London	Statistics	Univac 1100/60
2B Computers on order for scientific and technical purposes				
January 1981	Defence (PE)	Chertsey	Computer-aided design facilities	Tektronix 4081
February 1981	Home Office	London	Mathematical modelling, simulation and emulation	DEC VAX 11/780
February 1981	Defence (Navy)	Manadon	Teaching aid	DEC PDP 11/34A
February 1981	Defence (Army)	Shrivenham	Classroom support system	DEC VAX 11/780
February 1981	Defence (PE)	Westcott	General scientific computing	Tektronix 4054

[1, 2] Refer to supplement to May edition for Department and Manufacturer keys.

New CSD Publications

This is a list of the documents recently issued by the Civil Service Department and its associated bodies. These items may be examined in the Central Management Library, Civil Service Department, Old Admiralty Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AZ. Unless otherwise stated, requests for copies should be sent to the Central Management Library, CSD, at the above address. HMSO publications may be ordered from PO Box 569, London SE1 9NH, from Government bookshops, or through any bookseller.

Allocation of Pension: Explanatory Memorandum, Rules, and Tables prepared by the Government Actuary
HMSO; 2nd ed; 1981; 34 pages; £2·70
ISBN 0 11 630436 7

The Civil Service commission 1855–1975
by K M Reader
HMSO; 1981; 99 pages; £7·50
ISBN 0 11 630437 5
Civil Service Studies no. 5

The Civil Service Year Book 1981
HMSO; 1981; 380 pages; £9·80
ISBN 0 11 630439 1

Control of Expenditure: Departmental Responsibilities
A joint CSD/Treasury publication; 1981; 6 pages; gratis

Efficiency in the Civil Service
Cmnd 8293
HMSO; 1981; 14 pages; £2·10
ISBN 0 10 182930 2

Government Statistical Services
Cmnd 8236
HMSO; 1981; 17 pages; £2·10
ISBN 0 10 182360 6

Independent Review of the Work of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts
Report by D Caplan, April 1980
1981; [64 pages]; gratis

Interchange of Staff Between the Home Civil Service and Industry: Report for 1980
1981; [20 pages]; gratis
ISSN 0143–2001

Report on the Rayner Review: Attendance Charges for Civil Service College Courses—A Scrutiny of the Possibility of Charging for Attendance at some Courses at the Civil Service College
1981; 41 pages; £1·00
ISBN 0 7115 0032 0

Report on the Rayner Review: The Technical Services Organisation of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency
1981; 106 pages; £1·00
ISBN 0 7115 0033 9

Responsibilities of the Principal Establishment Officer
1981; 8 pages; gratis

Statistical Services in the Civil Service Department. Report by the Rayner Survey Officer and Statement of Decisions by Ministers

1981; 38 pages; £1·00
ISBN 0 7115 0031 2

Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency

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Monthly; Nos. 2, 3 and 4; gratis
ISSN 0260-857X

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1981; 14 pages; gratis

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1981; 43 pages; £1·00
ISBN 0 7115 0035 5
ISSN 0143-2664

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by P Armitage
1981; 9 pages; gratis
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1981; 294 pages; gratis
ISSN 0143-1919

A Selection of Courses and Seminars: Autumn Term September–December 1981
1981; 2 pages; gratis
ISSN 0143-1447

Systems Training Courses: Programme September 1981–August 1982
1981; 52 pages; gratis
ISSN 0143-1900

Tenth Annual Report by the Principal to the Civil Service College Advisory Council September 1979–August 1980
1981; 51 pages; gratis
ISSN 0305-9634

Civil Service Commission
Annual Report 1980
1981; 56 pages; gratis
ISBN 0 903741 61 X

Civil Service Council for Further Education

Conspectus of Further Education—Academic Year 1981–1982: N Eastern, Yorks and Humberside Regions
1981; 41 pages; gratis

Essential Information for Day-Release Students: Scotland
1981; 13 pages; gratis

A Guide to the Day-Release Scheme (Scotland)
1981; 32 pages; gratis

1981 Conspectus of Further Education in Scotland
1981; 26 pages; gratis

Opportunities in Adult Further Education: Scotland
1981; 12 pages; gratis

Civil Service Pay Research Unit Board and Civil Service Pay Research Unit

Report of the Civil Service Pay Research Unit Board and the Civil Service Pay Research Unit 1981
HMSO; 1981; 34 pages; £2·70
ISBN 0 11 630442 1

Published by CSD 1968-1980

Published by CSD 1968-1980 is a catalogue of the publications issued by the Civil Service Department from November 1968, when the Department was first set up, to December 1980. It is a 24-page survey, giving full details (including date of issue, availability, and price if any) of a wide range of reports, surveys and guidance material on all aspects of the management of people at work. The items in the list are arranged in broad subject categories, ranging from Accountancy to Welfare. The catalogue includes material published by the Central Computer Agency, the Civil Service College, the Civil Service Commission and various other bodies in the central public sector, as well as by CSD itself.

The catalogue may be obtained, without charge, from The Librarian, Central Management Library, Civil Service Department, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AZ.

Letter to the Editor

Sir

J A Barker's article (May 81) on the role of Organisation Development in Management Services Work is a useful introduction to organisation theory for relative newcomers to the MS field. To seasoned MS practitioners, however, it can only appear as a 'takeover bid' for the 'O' in O & M by a motley of academics and their opportunist disciples in the public service. That some MS assignments are too superficial in their diagnosis and prescriptions is a commonplace; but to imply that this superficiality is an inherent feature of all MS practice unguided (not directed?) by OD exponents is clearly tendentious. The real world, as distinct from models, is one in which the more senior levels of the organisation—not the MS practitioner—determine the scope of individual assignments, with due regard to time and cost-benefit aspects. Also, the senior O & M practitioner is necessarily well-versed in organisation concepts and somewhat adept in influencing actual attitudes and behaviour in the organisations he serves. The suggestion that, as a species O & M staff are less concerned than those in 'OD' with gaining local commitment and the implementation and evaluation of agreed changes is quite absurd; how else do we continue to enjoy the practical support and esteem of so many organisations (outside the 'behavioural science' institutions of course)? If Mr Barker's conclusions are indeed legitimately derived from interviewing the (over 200) staff who attended Consultancy Skills courses at the Civil Service College, then perhaps he should also have interviewed the ones who saw no need to attend; and for the sake of the Civil Service one can only hope these are more numerous.

F K JOHNSON

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